

# Benchmarking Demand: Turkey's Contested Internet

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This survey report is a product of an ongoing research project by faculty and graduate students at the Ohio State University and Koç University with support from the Center for Global Communication Studies' Internet Policy Observatory at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communication. The data in this report was collected between December 20, 2014 and February 2, 2015 and represents the views of 1161 respondents from that time. The goal of the project is to understand how people in Turkey perceive and value the debate over Internet freedoms in Turkey and how they employ the Internet and social media as alternative information resources within a heavily censored mass media environment. This is an important question more broadly as 85% of the globe's population live within censored media systems like Turkey.

Funding for this study was provided by the School of Communication and Mershon Center for International Security Studies at the Ohio State University, Koç University, and the Center for Global Communication Studies' Internet Policy Observatory at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communication.

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# Contents

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Foreword .....	4
Executive Summary of Survey Results .....	6
Profile of Turkish Internet Users .....	10
Turkish Information Policy Literacy.....	14
Turkish Evaluations of Internet Content .....	15
Turkish Demand for Internet Freedom .....	18
Perceived Supply of Turkish Internet Freedom .....	24
Democratic Deficit in Turkish Internet Freedoms.....	29
Internet Blockage and Circumvention.....	31
Study Methodology.....	35

# Foreword

**By Aysenur Dal and Golnoosh Behrouzian**

The role of the Internet as a fundamental tool for communication and empowerment is one that should not be inhibited as the limitless nature of the medium allows for a broader, unfiltered, and more democratic exchange of information. These features become increasingly important in conditions where the mainstream media are unwilling or unable to provide the public with the information necessary to function as democratic citizens and maintain political accountability. Though an open Internet tends to be valued by more democratic governments, the percentage of countries adhering to the standards of open and free media is dismally low. In a majority of countries, governments maintain a stringent level of control over many of the mainstream information outlets, making the Internet a vital source of alternative information for the people living within these environments.

While media censorship is certainly not a new phenomenon, it becomes especially noteworthy when a country experiences a sudden setback in the realms of media independence and freedom of information. Such cases allow for a more nuanced observation of how much the public values media freedom and their expectations of media performance. Turkey is a striking example of how a sudden dip in media freedom may impact the social and political climate of a country.

Over the last couple of years, Turkey has become a prominent case for how a nominally democratic country can practice intensive censorship against voices criticizing the government. Imprisonment of journalists, mass firings of media personnel, issuing gag orders about key political events, intimidation of journalists through prosecution and lawsuits, imposing huge tax fines on media corporations, facilitating the concentration of media ownership by government supporters, and passing increasingly restrictive laws on media freedom are some of the political, economic and legal measures undertaken by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) controlled government aimed at taming the Turkish press<sup>1</sup>. In turn, it has become quite common for numerous major media outlets to openly perform

self-censorship about key political events and topics without an official publication ban on the matter.

In addition to traditional media outlets in Turkey that have historically been forced to stay close to the state in order to survive, the Internet, too, has faced serious restrictions from the leading political authorities. The initial comprehensive regulation for censoring the Internet took place in 2007 with the desire for a “clean Internet”.<sup>2</sup> The legislation not only targeted pornographic websites and downloading hosts but also websites like YouTube and Blogger for reasons such as promoting insults to the founder of the Republic of Turkey and attacking political leaders. With approximately 80,000 domain names blocked since the advent of this law, the government has made its position towards “dangerous” content circulating online clear and put Turkey in the limelight with respect to Internet censorship.<sup>3</sup>

Recently, the government’s battle against social media attracted global attention with respect to the attacks on freedom of expression within the Turkish political environment. According to Twitter’s latest Transparency Report, 92% of the court orders for content removal in the first half of 2015 came from Turkey - a manifestation of declining tolerance for anti-government content circulating online.<sup>4</sup> The 2013 national wave of protests that began with the Gezi Park demonstration, combined with the leaked wire-tapping of government officials, demonstrated social media’s potential for facilitating anti-regime mobilization which further incentivized the government to place additional legal restrictions on channels of online communication.

In effect since February 2014, important amendments made to the abovementioned law have facilitated the censorship process in an unprecedented way.<sup>5</sup> Namely, the law authorized the Telecommunications Communication Presidency (TIB) to implement blocking orders

1 Corke, S., Finkel, A., Kramer, D. J., Robbins, C. A., & Schenkan, N. (2014). *Democracy in crisis: Corruption, media, and power in Turkey*. Retrieved from: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-reports/democracy-crisis-corruption-media-and-power-turkey>

2 Akgül, M. & Kırılıdoğ, M. (2015). *Internet censorship in Turkey*. Retrieved from: <http://policyreview.info/articles/analysis/internet-censorship-turkey>

3 ibid

4 *Removal Requests/Transparency Report*. Retrieved from: <https://transparency.twitter.com/removal-requests/2015/jan-jun>

5 Letsch, C. (February 6, 2014). *Turkey pushes through new raft of 'draconian' internet restrictions*. Retrieved from: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/06/turkey-internet-law-censorship-democracy-threat-opposition>

in four hours, obliged Internet service providers to retain users' online activity information up to two years and required these ISPs to provide this data to authorities upon request. Soon after these changes, TIB temporarily banned Twitter and YouTube shortly before the March 2014 national municipal elections causing a negative reaction from both Turkish and international audiences.<sup>6</sup> Ironically, a remarkable portion of these protests happened on Twitter by users who circumvented the ban, including the former President of Turkey Abdullah Gul.

Similarly, in April 2015, the URLs of Twitter and YouTube -as well as 166 other websites - were temporarily blocked under the pretext of not removing the images of a prosecutor with a gun pointed at his head by far-left militants during an hostage situation.<sup>7</sup> Facebook, known for complying with the content removal requests coming from Turkey more so than other social media platforms, was not subjected to such blocking due to their timely removal of the images.

All in all, the global clash between citizens' demand for free and open online environments and the ongoing use of political/legal measures by governments to inhibit their availability makes the Turkish experience worthy of international attention. As the world keeps witnessing political authorities' attempts to limit the Internet's potential for disseminating critical political information, it is imperative for researchers to build an understanding of how citizens with different backgrounds and political leanings perceive and act upon censorship in restrictive information environments.

Within this context, the situation in Turkey provides an opportunity to observe the concepts of media freedom supply and demand, and better understand how these ideas influence media use and information-seeking behavior. In this context, the "supply" of media freedom is characterized by the amount of media freedom an individual perceives they have, while "demand" for media freedom is defined by the amount of media freedom an individual wants or values.<sup>8</sup> When media freedom

demand outweighs media freedom supply, a deficit forms, resulting in potential dissatisfaction with the media system. The effects of a perceived media freedom deficit may manifest into more complex psychological responses related to restoring the individual's freedom to access information. In instances where a media freedom deficit is evident to an individual, he or she may become motivated to not only reestablish access to media freedoms that have been limited by the government, but also to resist media discourse being propagated by the censored source. Yet another reaction could be a deepening silence in face of rising pressure from the government. Such silence could manifest itself in strategic switching to not only alternative media sources but also other relatively less risky activities on the Internet that would keep individuals out of the regulatory radar screen.

Media censorship not only impacts the consumption habits of the public, but it can influence the type of information to which people become exposed. Specifically, people who feel that mainstream media is too constrained may turn to the Internet for information based on the perception that it is more open and pluralistic. Therefore, the type of information acquired through online sources becomes an important consideration, as well. Research suggests that information from the Internet provides two distinct perspectives for citizens. The first is one that allows people to reflect upon the situation and environment in their own country through a process called "mirror holding". The second approach affords people the opportunity to better understand events and situations in other countries in comparison to their own, by way of a "window opening" approach.<sup>9</sup> Both of these tactics permit individuals to learn and evolve within their particular environment.

Keeping in mind the aforementioned theoretical concepts and applying them to the media conditions in Turkey, we are able to develop a more integrated approach to analyzing the importance of Internet censorship and how citizens view and respond to this obstacle. While there is much to be desired in this area of research, these reports bring us one step closer to understanding the nuanced perceptions of Internet censorship in a global context.

6 Letsch, C. (March 28, 2014). *Turkey blocks YouTube amid 'national security' concerns*. Retrieved from: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/27/google-youtube-ban-turkey-erdogan>

7 Arango, T. (April 7, 2015). *Turkey Blocks YouTube and, Briefly, Twitter Over Hostage Photo*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/07/world/europe/turkey-blocks-twitter-youtube-and-sites-that-published-hostage-photo.html>

8 Nisbet, E. C., & Stoycheff, E. (2013). Let the people speak: a multilevel model of supply and demand for press freedom. *Communication Research*, 40(5), 720-741.

9 Bailard, C. (2014). *Democracy's Double-Edged Sword: How Internet Use Changes Citizens' Views of their Government*. Bethesda, MD: Johns Hopkins Press

# Executive Summary of Survey Results

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## Profile of Turkish Internet Users

The percentage of survey respondents identifying themselves as Internet users was 51% with 36% of Turkish citizens reporting they use the Internet every day. Non-users of the Internet are marked by being older, women, lower educated, from larger household size, having lower monthly household income, more likely to be Kurdish than the general population, are more religious, and are more likely to identify as Justice and Development Party (AKP) supporters.

In comparison, those who use the Internet everyday are very young, are more likely to be male, have higher rates of secondary school and some college attainment, have smaller household size and high household incomes, are more likely to identify primarily as Turkish, are more secular, and are more likely to either identify with the People's Republican Party (CHP) or no party at all.

The most frequent use of the Internet is accessing online social networking platform such as Facebook or Twitter (91% all Internet users). This is followed by downloading or listening to music online (81% of Internet users) and downloading or watching videos, movies, or TV shows (79% of Internet users). Approximately two-thirds of Internet users use Internet sources such as blogs, websites, and social media for news at least once a month. The least popular online activity is buying or ordering goods and services (33% of Internet users report doing so at least once a month).

The top five most popular social networking sites among Turkish Internet users is Facebook, followed by Google+, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. Four out of five Turkish social media users read news headlines or short news summaries via social media at least once a month and three out of five look at videos or images about political leaders or parties at least once a month on social media. Nearly half of Turkish social media users report discussing political issues with others, sharing news stories or videos, or liking, posting, commenting on anything related to politics at least once a month.

## Turkish Information Policy Literacy

Survey respondents were asked four true/false questions testing their knowledge on media and Internet policies in Turkey as a means to evaluate their policy literacy about freedom of expression issues. Half of Turkish citizens correctly rated as false that Turkey has fewer journalists in jail as compared to most countries. Approximately one third of respondents correctly rated as false that the National Intelligence Agency may only access citizen data with a court order. The Supreme Council of Radio and Television Broadcasts (RTUK) law allowing the prime minister or a minister appointed by him to temporarily halt broadcasts when national security or public order is under threat was correctly identified as true by one third of respondents. Twenty-nine percent of Turkish citizens correctly knew that Turkish ISPs are required to collect user data for two years and provide the government the data on demand. Overall, on a scale ranging from zero to four, the mean correct score was 1.4 for all respondents.

## Turkish Evaluations of Internet Content

About one-quarter of all Turkish citizens are satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of the Internet in Turkey while this number rises to one-third among heavy Internet users. However, forty-percent of all Turkish citizens, as well as heavy Internet users, are either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the Internet in Turkey.

Beyond feeling dissatisfied, pluralities of Turkish citizens feel that the social media threatens different social, cultural, and political elements in Turkey. In general two out five Turkish citizens believe social media threatens families, is being used to spread false rumors about political leaders, promotes Western values over Turkish ones, is being used against Turkey by foreign countries, threatens Islamic teachings and beliefs, and increases the threat of terrorism. However, a plurality of Turkish citizens (roughly again two out of five) disagree that social media threatens Turkey's political stability. Though among heavy Internet users these perceptions were less prevalent, one-third of heavy Internet users still agreed that social media presented a general menace to society.

## Turkish Demand for Internet Freedom

Two out of five people living in Turkey believe the Internet should be completely free of government censorship while a bit over a quarter disagree with this viewpoint. Among heavy Internet users the number of respondents desiring a completely free and open Internet rises to one out of two. Opinion also varies considerably by political party support, with over half of People's Republican Party (CHP) supporters preferring a complete uncensored Internet while the plurality of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) supporters prefers a censored Internet.

About one in five Turkish citizens support recent restrictions placed on the Internet by the Turkish government in 2014 as compared to nearly half of all respondents who oppose them. The percentage of Turkish citizens opposing recent government restrictions on the Internet rises to nearly two-thirds among heavy Internet users. Attitudes again vary by political affiliation. Three quarters of CHP supporters oppose recent government restrictions on the Internet while the plurality of AKP supporters, about 40%, favors the restrictions.

The vast majority of Respondents (seven out of ten) agree that pornographic or sexually explicit Internet content should be censored by the government. There is also strong support across all amounts of Internet use for censoring online content that criticizes Islam. In contrast, there is little support for censoring political information such as online content that attacks the government or advocates minority rights among Turkish citizens. On other topics, such as online content that damages political leaders' reputations or insults Turkish national values or history, respondents tend to evenly divide on whether to censor or not.

Support for online censorship of specific topics varies considerably by party affiliation in Turkey. Supporters of the center-right AKP and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) heavily favor censoring online content that criticizes Islam while the plurality of center-left CHP and People's Democratic Party (HDP) supporters oppose censorship of such content. A similar ideological divide exists among Turkish citizens when asked whether online content that insults Turkish national values and history should be censored.

In terms of online political content, the plurality of AKP supporters favor censoring online content that damages political leader's reputations or is used to organize anti-government protests. However, at the same time, pluralities of AKP supporters oppose censoring online content that attacks the government or advocates for minority rights. In contrast, supporters of the three opposition parties (CHP, MHP, HDP) are all heavily opposed to censoring any of these forms of online content with the greater intensity of opposition coming from supporters of the CHP, the largest opposition party.

Survey respondents were asked their agreement with four statements: a) online blogs and social media criticizing the government should be free from government censorship, b) citizens should be free from coercion and violence when discussing and conveying controversial issues online, c) citizens should be free to access government information online, and d) anyone in Turkey should be able to have a website, blog, or share content online.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents demand that citizens be free from government coercion and violence when expressing opinions online. A similar percentage demands that online blogs and social media be free from government censorship. Six out of ten people living in Turkey also agree that that anyone should be able have a presence online and that Turkish citizens should have access to government information online. These levels of support for basic Internet freedom are the same across a range of demographic characteristics including frequency of Internet use and political party support.

## Perceived Supply of Turkish Internet Freedom

Nearly half of Turkish citizens perceive the Internet as censored/very censored in Turkey as compared to about one third who perceive it to be free/very free. Among heavy Internet users the percentage of respondents who perceive the Internet as censored/very censored rises to almost two-thirds. Perceptions of Internet censorship are also highly divergent between political parties. Half of AKP supporters perceive the Internet as free/very free in Turkey while seven out of ten CHP supporters perceive it as censored/very censored. The majority of the supporters of the other two major opposition parties, the MHP and HDP, also perceive the Internet as censored/very censored.

Government online surveillance and high profile prosecutions of journalists, celebrities, and average citizens for anti-government online comments have created concerns in Turkey about online privacy and political expression. One-third of Turkish Internet users agree that they avoid certain websites, blogs, and online conversations. Another third of Internet users are afraid to openly share with others online what they think about some political topics. Two out of five Internet users worry about their privacy when using commercial websites. However these privacy concerns vary considerably by party support. “Majorities of AKP supporters disagree that they avoid certain websites, blogs, and online conversations due to online monitoring by the government and are afraid to openly share with others online what they think about some political topics. In comparison, opposition supporters (CHP, MHP, HDP) are much more likely to state that they avoid certain websites, blogs, and online conversations due to online surveillance and are afraid to openly share with others online what they think about some political topics

On questions regarding opinions about specific internet freedom issues in Turkey, the survey respondents were highly split. Turkish citizens are evenly divided on whether citizens are free or not from government coercion and violence when discussing controversial topics online or whether they have free and open access to government information online. Pluralities of Turkish citizens do agree that the government does not prevent citizens from criticizing the government on online blogs and social media and that anyone in Turkey may have a website, blog, or share content online.

Pluralities of AKP supporters perceive the Internet as free on each of these questions. In contrast, pluralities of opposition party supporters (CHP, MHP, HDP) do not believe citizens are free from government coercion and violence when discussing controversial topics online or that citizens have free and open access to government information online. However, pluralities of opposition party supporters do agree with AKP supporters that the government does not prevent citizens from criticizing it in online blogs and social media and that anyone in Turkey may have a website, blog, or share content online.

## Democratic Deficit in Turkish Internet Freedom

Comparing how much Internet freedom Turkish citizens want to how much they perceive as possessing, several gaps, or democratic deficits, appear. Respondents perceive the biggest democratic deficits on questions of government coercion and violence toward citizens discussing controversial topics online and of accessing government information online. There is a substantial difference in perceptions of democratic deficits between heavy Internet users and non-users, with the size of perceived democratic deficits among heavy Internet users on average two to three times that of non-users. The overall democratic deficit of AKP supporters is three times less than the average Turk, five times less than CHP supporters, four times less than MHP supporters, and three times less than HDP supporters.

## Internet Blockage and Circumvention

Roughly a quarter of the Turkish public report knowing a great deal about the YouTube and Twitter blockages that began in March 2014. Another roughly quarter of survey respondents is familiar with the blockages but did not know all the details. The remainder of respondents, comprising a bit over half the population, had heard something or nothing at all. However, awareness of the bans varied substantially by frequency of Internet and social media usage. Half of heavy Internet users reported knowing a great deal about the blockage of Twitter compared to less than one in ten non-users. For the YouTube blockage the pattern was the same. Over half of Twitter users reported knowing a great deal and another quarter reported being familiar about the Twitter blockage in Turkey. About half of YouTube users reported knowing a great deal about the YouTube ban in Turkey and a quarter of YouTube users also reported being familiar with the ban but not knowing all the details.

About half of all Turkish citizens strongly disapprove/disapprove of both the Twitter and YouTube blockages by the Turkish government. At the same time about one in six Turkish citizens supported the banning of these two platforms. The remaining roughly third of Turkish citizens in each case either neither approved nor disapproved of the bans or replied it was too difficult to tell. The blockage of Twitter and YouTube were deeply un-



popular among heavy Internet users with nearly seven out of ten heavy users in each case strongly disapproving/disapproving of the bans. Likewise three-fourths of Twitter users and two-thirds of YouTube users strongly disapproved/disapproved of the government blocking.

The blockage of these two social media platforms was deeply polarizing, not only between supporters of the ruling AKP party and the opposition parties but also among AKP supporters themselves. About one in three AKP supporters favored the government blocking Twitter and YouTube. However, at the same time nearly a quarter of AKP supporters also opposed the bans in each case. Disapproval of the blockages was very high among supporters of the opposition parties and those with no party affiliation, while at the same time approval was extremely low. Nearly three-fourth of CHP supporters disapproved of the blockages as well as majorities of and HDP supporters and those with no party affiliation.

Eight out of ten Turkish Internet users reported not circumventing the blockages of either YouTube or Twitter. One in ten Internet users reported circumventing the bans occasionally while one in twenty did so a fair amount and another one in twenty did so all the time. Among Twitter and YouTube users specifically, the reported frequency of circumvention was significantly higher with about one in ten YouTube and Twitter users reporting they circumvented the blockages all the time.

## Profile of Turkish Internet Users

Over the five year period between 2009 and 2013, the percentage of Turkish citizens using the Internet increased by 28% (growing from 36% in 2009 to 46% in 2013).<sup>10</sup> Our survey results are consistent with this trend with 51% of respondents identifying themselves as Internet users. Respondents to the survey may be split into three segments based on their frequency of Internet use (see Figure 1). The largest segment is non-users of the Internet and account for 49% of the Turkish adult population. The second largest segment of the adult population (36%) is people who report using the Internet every day. Turkish adults who use the Internet ranging anywhere from less than once a month to two to three times a week make up 15% of the Turkish population.

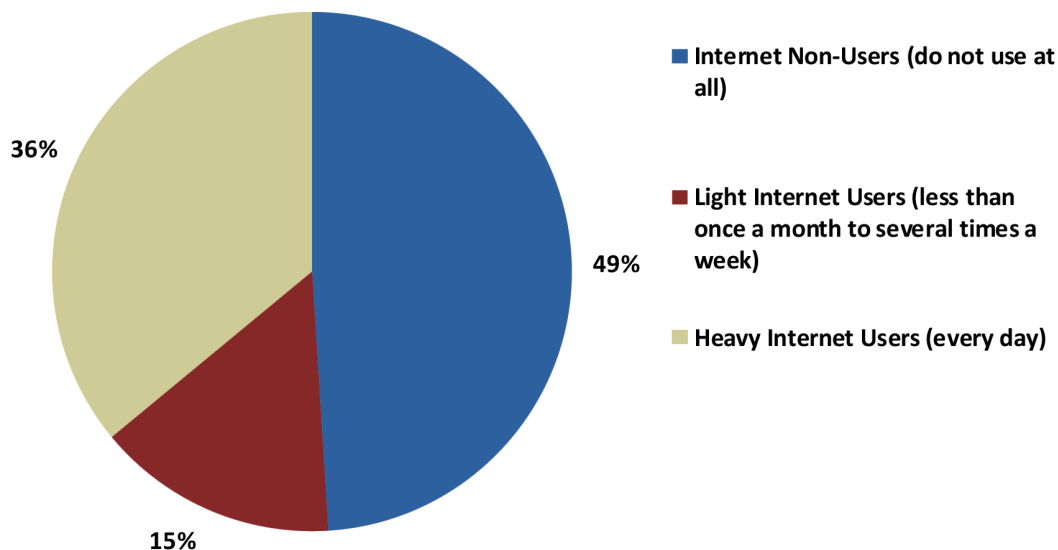
Table 1 provides the demographic and social profile of our three Internet use segments in Turkey. Non-users of the Internet are marked by being older (35% over 55), women (57%), lower educated (68% primary schooling or less), larger household size (3.7 persons on average), lower monthly household income (1465 TR), are more likely to be Kurdish than the general population (22%), are more religious (55% high religiosity), and more likely to identify as Justice and Development Party (AKP) supporters (47%).

<sup>10</sup> International Telecommunication Union ICT Indicators 2014 Database

In comparison, Turkish citizens who use the Internet every day are very young (58% less than 34 years old), are more likely to be male (57%), have higher rates of secondary school (51%) and some college attainment (38%), have smaller household size (3.2 persons), high household incomes (2363 TR), are more likely to identify primarily as Turkish (87%), are more secular (59% low or moderate religiosity), and are more likely to either identify with the People's Republican Party (29%) or no party at all (30%). Light Internet users tend to reflect the profile of heavy Internet users more so than non-users except they tend to be more conservative socially (51% report high religiosity) and politically (38% identify with Justice and Development Party).

Internet users were asked how frequently they engage in nine different forms of online activities. Table 2 provides the percentage of respondents overall and within each Internet use segment that reported engaging in each activity regularly at least once a month or more. The most frequent use of the Internet among both heavy Internet users (93%) and light Internet users (85%) in Turkey is using online social networking platform such as Facebook or Twitter (91% of all Internet users). There is a much larger divide between heavy and light Internet use segments when it comes to downloading or listening to music online (67% of light users vs. 87% of heavy users) and downloading or watching videos, movies, or TV shows (58% of light users vs. 87% of heavy users).

**FIGURE 1: TURKISH FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE** (percentage of total respondents)



**TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERNET USE SEGMENTS** (percentage of total respondents)

Demographic Category	Frequency of Internet Use			All Respondents
	Non-Users	Light Users	Heavy Users	
<b>Age</b>				
% 18-34 years old	24	52	58	40
% 35-54 years old	41	42	38	40
% 55 or more years old	35	6	4	20
<b>Gender</b>				
% Men	43	59	57	50
% Women	57	41	43	50
<b>Educational Attainment</b>				
% Primary education or less	68	22	11	41
% Secondary or high school	28	57	51	41
% Some college or more	4	21	38	19
<b>Household Characteristics</b>				
Monthly Household Income (TR per month)	1465	2292	2363	1911
Mean Household Size (persons)	3.7	3.4	3.2	3.4
Monthly Household Income Per Person	396	674	738	562
<b>Primary Ethnicity</b>				
% Turkish	74	85	87	80
% Kurdish	22	13	10	16
% Other	4	2	3	4
<b>Muslim Religiosity</b>				
% Low	16	21	26	20
% Moderate	29	29	33	31
% High	55	51	41	49
<b>Party Identification</b>				
% Justice and Development Party (AKP)	47	38	29	39
% People's Republican Party (CHP)	16	23	23	19
% Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)	7	11	10	9
% People's Democratic Party (HDP)	9	8	7	8
% No party identification	22	20	30	25

The other stark contrasts between Internet use segments appear in the frequency of emailing with friends and family (63% of light users and 82% of heavy users), how often they post comments/entries on blogs or news websites (43% of light users and 64% of heavy users), and frequency of searching online for information about political leaders or topics (41% of light users vs. 62% of heavy users). When it comes to using the Internet as a news source (51% of light users and 69% of heavy users), playing games online (53% of light users and 66% of heavy users), and buying/ordering goods or services online (25% of light users vs. 36% of heavy users) the differences between heavy and light Internet users are much smaller.

As social networking sites (SNS) are used by 91% of Internet users at least once a month, we asked survey respondents which specific SNS they used and how frequently they engaged in a several forms of information-seeking and expression activities on SNS. The top SNS (for which at least 5% of Internet users reported using) are listed in Figure 2 along with the percentage of light and heavy Internet users that reported using the site.

Facebook is by far the most popular SNS with 92% of heavy Internet users and 87% of light Internet citing its use. The next most popular SNS are Google+, cited by

**TABLE 2: ONLINE ACTIVITIES ONCE A MONTH OR MORE BY INTERNET USE SEGMENTS** (percentage of Internet users)

Type of Internet Activity	Frequency of Internet Use		% of All Internet Users
	% of Light Users	% of Heavy Users	
Use online social networking platforms such as Facebook or Twitter	85	93	<b>91</b>
Download or listen to music	67	87	<b>81</b>
Download/watch videos, movies, TV shows	58	87	<b>79</b>
Send/receive email w/ friends and family	63	82	<b>76</b>
Use Internet sources (blogs, websites, social media) for news	51	69	<b>64</b>
Play games online	53	66	<b>62</b>
Post comments/entries on blog or news website	43	64	<b>58</b>
Search for information on political leaders or topics	41	62	<b>55</b>
Buy/order goods or services	25	36	<b>33</b>

61% of heavy users and 51% of light users, and YouTube which has a similar split between heavy (61%) and light (47%) users. The fourth most popular social networking site in Turkey is Twitter with about two in five heavy Internet users (44%) and one in three light users (32%) reporting using the platform. Instagram is fifth place with one in four (27%) of heavy users and 17% of light users on the platform. The last two SNS for which at least 5% of Internet users reported using are Ekşi Sözlük<sup>11</sup> (13% of heavy and 8% of light users) and Vine (6% of both heavy and light users).

11 Ekşi Sözlük is a collaborative hypertext 'dictionary' based on about 55 thousand volunteer contributors. It has a dual use with thousands sharing information on various topics ranging from science to to everyday life issues as well as being used as a virtual socio-political community to communicate disputed political contents and to share personal views. See Hatice Akca (2005). *The Internet as a participatory medium: An analysis of the Ekşi Sozluk website as a public sphere* (M.A. dissertation thesis). University of South Carolina. Similarly Vine is a short-form video sharing service wherein users can share six second-long video clips.

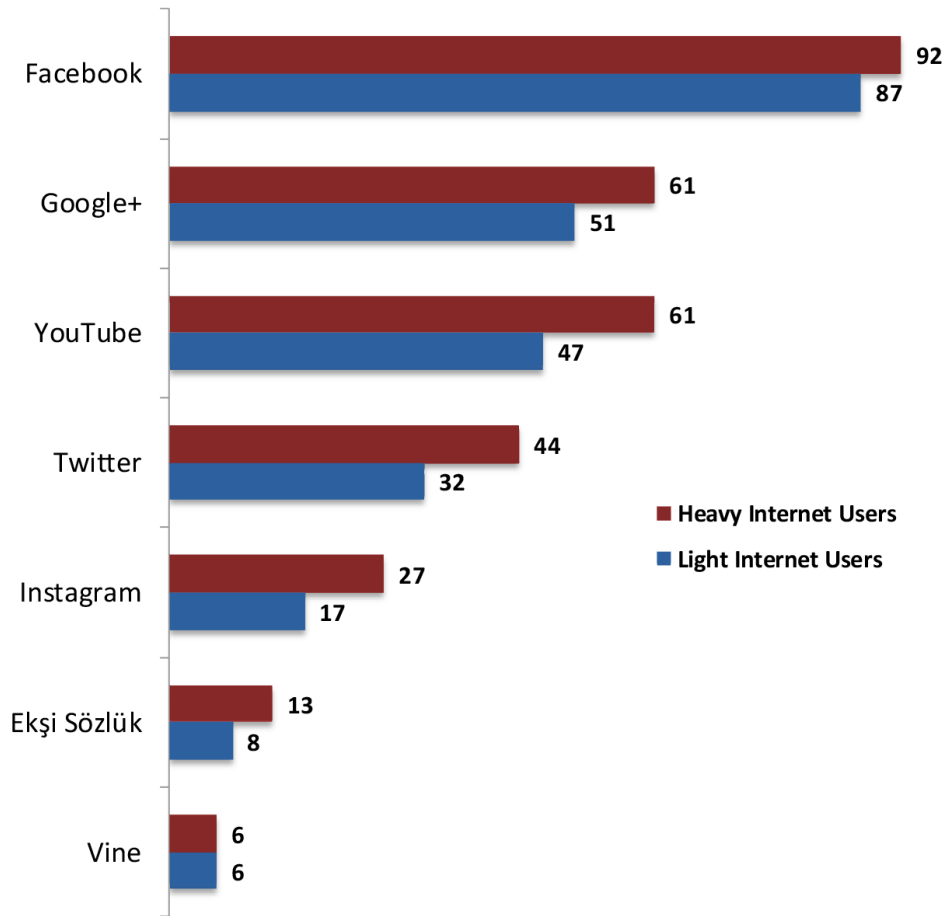
**TABLE 3: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM ACTIVITIES ONCE A MONTH OR MORE BY INTERNE USE SEGMENTS** (percentage of Internet users)

Type of Social Media Activity	Frequency of Internet Use		
	% of Light Users	% of Heavy Users	% of All Social Media Users
<b>Information-seeking behaviors</b>			
Read news headlines or short news summaries	76	86	<b>81</b>
Look at videos or images about political leaders or parties	58	61	<b>60</b>
Read political opinions about political leaders or issues	58	60	<b>59</b>
Read messages from, or profiles of, political leaders or parties	51	55	<b>53</b>
<b>Political expression behaviors</b>			
Discuss political issues with others	47	45	<b>46</b>
Share news stories or videos automatically that you view on news websites or blogs	49	42	<b>46</b>
Like, post or comment on anything related to politics, including news stories, opinions, images, or videos	50	40	<b>45</b>
Recruit people to get involved with political issues	39	28	<b>34</b>

In addition to asking what SNS Turkish citizens use, we also asked how frequently they engaged in eight forms of political information-seeking and expression activities on their social media sites to which they belong. Social media users were divided into categories of heavy social media users (use social media everyday - 49% of users) and light social media users (use social media 2-3 times a week or less – 51% of users). Table 3 provides the percentage of light, heavy, and all social media users that reported regularly engaging in the listed behavior at least once a month or more often.

Among information-seeking behaviors we queried, the most frequent activity (81% of all Internet users) on social media was reading news headlines or short news summaries. There are substantial differences

**FIGURE 2: SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORK USE** (percentage of Internet users, multiple responses)



by frequency of Internet use, with 76% of light users as compared to 86% of heavy users reporting engaging in this the activity at least once a month. The least frequently reported information-seeking activity was reading messages from or profiles of political leaders or parties (53% of all users) though with a much smaller differences between light (51%) and heavy users (55%). As one may expect, a pattern that emerges is that more heavy social media users are somewhat more likely to engage in these information-seeking behaviors than light users.

Across different types of social media users, the number of users who discuss political issues with others (46%), clicking a “share” button to automatically share

news stories or videos from website or blogs (46%), and like political posts or comments (45%) on social media platforms at least once a month was about the same. However, compared to information-seeking behaviors, the pattern of differences between light and heavy social media users is reversed when considering political expression on social media. Light users compared to heavy users of social media are significantly more likely to report shared news stories or videos from website or blogs automatically (49% vs. 42%), liking political posts or comments (50% vs. 40%), and recruiting people to get involved with political issues (39% vs. 28%). In other words, heavy users appear to seek more information while light users appear to have more political expression behaviors on the web.

## Turkish Information Policy Literacy

Survey respondents were asked four true/false questions testing their knowledge on media and Internet policies in Turkey as a means of evaluating their policy literacy about freedom of expression issues in Turkey. The statements they were asked to rate as true or false were: a) Turkey has fewer journalists in jail than most countries (false), b) Internet service providers (ISPs) are required to collect all data on Internet user's activities for up to two years, and to provide authorities with the data in question on demand (true), c) The Supreme Council and Television Broadcasts (RTUK) law allows the prime minister or a minister appointed by him to temporarily halt broadcasts when national security or public order is under threat (true), d) the National Intelligence Agency (MIT) may only access a citizen's private data with a court order (false).

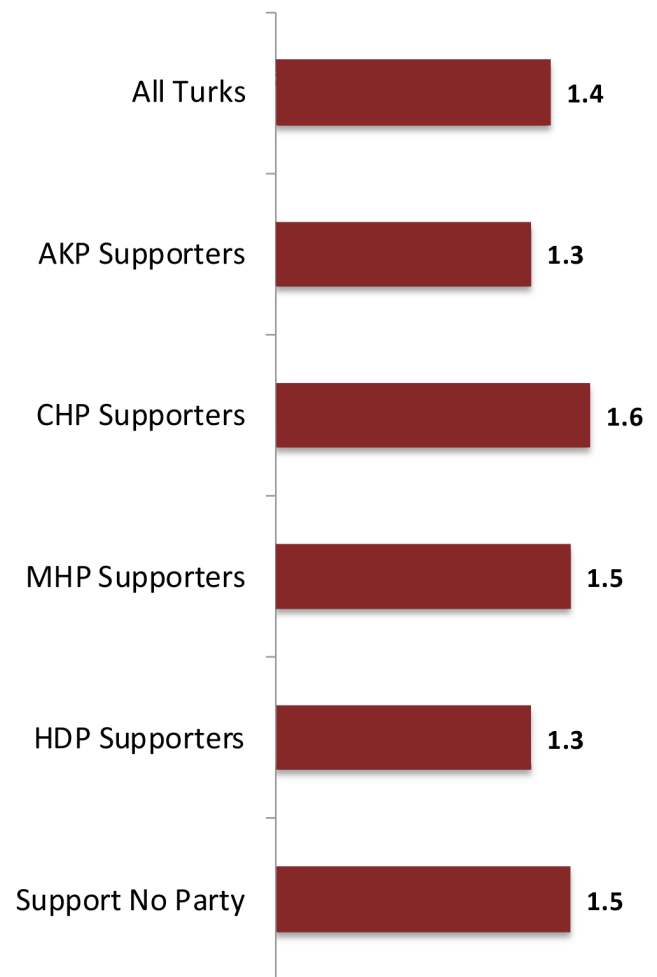
Overall, 50% of respondents correctly rated as false that Turkey has fewer journalists in jail than most countries while about one third (32%) of Turkish citizens correctly rated as false that the MIT may only access citizen data with a court order. About one-third (31%) of people living in Turkey also knew that the RTUK law allows the government to halt broadcasts when there is national security emergency or public order is under threat and a smaller number of (29%) of Turkish citizens correctly rate as true that ISPs are required to collect user data for two years and provide the government the data on demand.

Examining answers across frequency of Internet use, there is only significant variation between user segments on the question of Turkish journalists in jail. Almost two-thirds (61%) of heavy Internet users correctly rated as false that Turkey has fewer journalists in jail as compared to most countries while 53% of light users and 41% of non-users did the same.

Tallying the total number of correct answers per respondent allows us to score each respondent's general policy literacy on a 0-4 scale. Figure 6 present the mean scores for this scale for all respondents as well as for each group of party supporters. The mean score of correct answers for all Turkish citizens was 1.4. However, there was substantial variation in mean scores across groups of party supporters. Supporters of the opposition CHP party had the highest mean score of all the

political parties with an average of 1.6 answers correct out of four. The next highest scoring political groups were MHP supporters (1.5 avg. score) and those who do not support any party (1.5 avg. score). The lowest scoring groups were AKP and HDP supporters who each answered 1.3 out of four knowledge questions correctly.

**FIGURE 3: MEAN POLICY LITERACY BY POLITICAL PARTY** (percentage of total respondents, single response)



# Turkish Evaluations of Internet Content

Survey respondents were queried on how satisfied or unsatisfied they were with the quality of the websites and social media available in Turkey. Across all respondents, Internet users and non-users alike, about one-quarter (26%) were either very satisfied or satisfied with the quality of the web in Turkey. The plurality, 40%, were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied with its quality and about one-third of respondents (34%) were either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the quality of websites and social media available in Turkey.

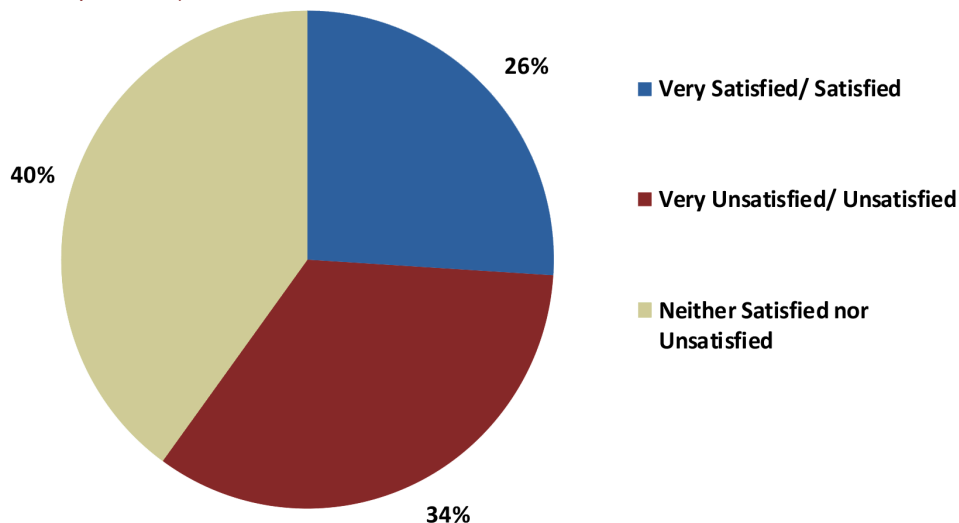
Among light and heavy Internet users satisfaction with the quality of available websites and social media in Turkey varies. The plurality of heavy Internet users (39%) are either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the quality of Turkish websites and social media as compared to 35% who state they are satisfied or very satisfied. The plurality of light users (36%) are neither satisfied nor unsatisfied with Internet quality, though a higher percentage of light users (34%) are unsatisfied/very unsatisfied with the quality of websites and social media as compared to those who are satisfied/very satisfied (30%).

Beyond overall satisfaction with the quality of the Internet in Turkey, Turkish citizens were also asked if

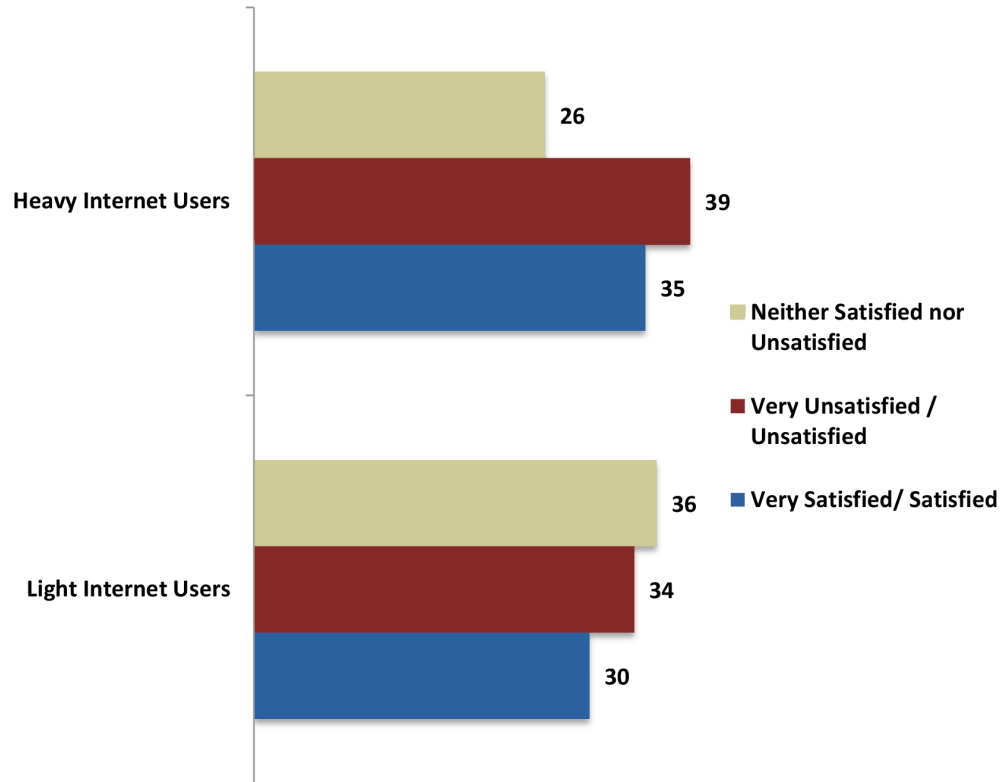
the social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube posed a threat across nine different dimensions, namely a) threatening family values b) being used to wrongly spread rumors and lies about public figures, c) promoting Western values more so than Turkish values, d) being used by foreign countries against Turkey, e) threatening Islamic teachings and values, f) increasing the threat of terrorism inside Turkey, g) is a general menace to society, h) increases the rate of suicides, i) is a threat to political stability. Figure 5 provides the percentages of respondents that agreed, disagreed, or were indifferent to these perceived threats of the Internet.

Substantial numbers of people residing in Turkey believe that social media threatens family values (44%), is used wrongly to spread false rumors and lies about public figures (43%), promotes Western values more so than Turkish values (41%), is used by foreign countries against Turkey (41%), threatens Islamic teachings and beliefs (40%), and increases the threat of terrorism inside Turkey (38%). Turkish citizens were rather more polarized on the questions of whether social media increased the rate of suicides in Turkey (35% agreed vs. 34% disagreeing) and threatened political stability (33% agreed vs. 37%

**FIGURE 4: SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF INTERNET IN TURKEY** (percentage of total respondents)



**FIGURE 5: SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF INTERNET IN TURKEY BY IN FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USER** (percentage of total respondents)



disagreed). Reflecting the political divisions within Turkey, 35% agreed with President Erdogan's 2013 assertion that social media was a general menace to society while 33% disagreed with his assessment.

However, opinions about these possible threats from the Internet vary substantially across the three Internet use segments as exhibited in Table 4, with non-users substantially more likely to view the Internet as threatening in general as compared to light and heavy Internet users. For instance, a plurality of Internet non-users (49%) agree that social media threatens family values whereas pluralities of light (46%) and heavy (42%) Internet users disagree.

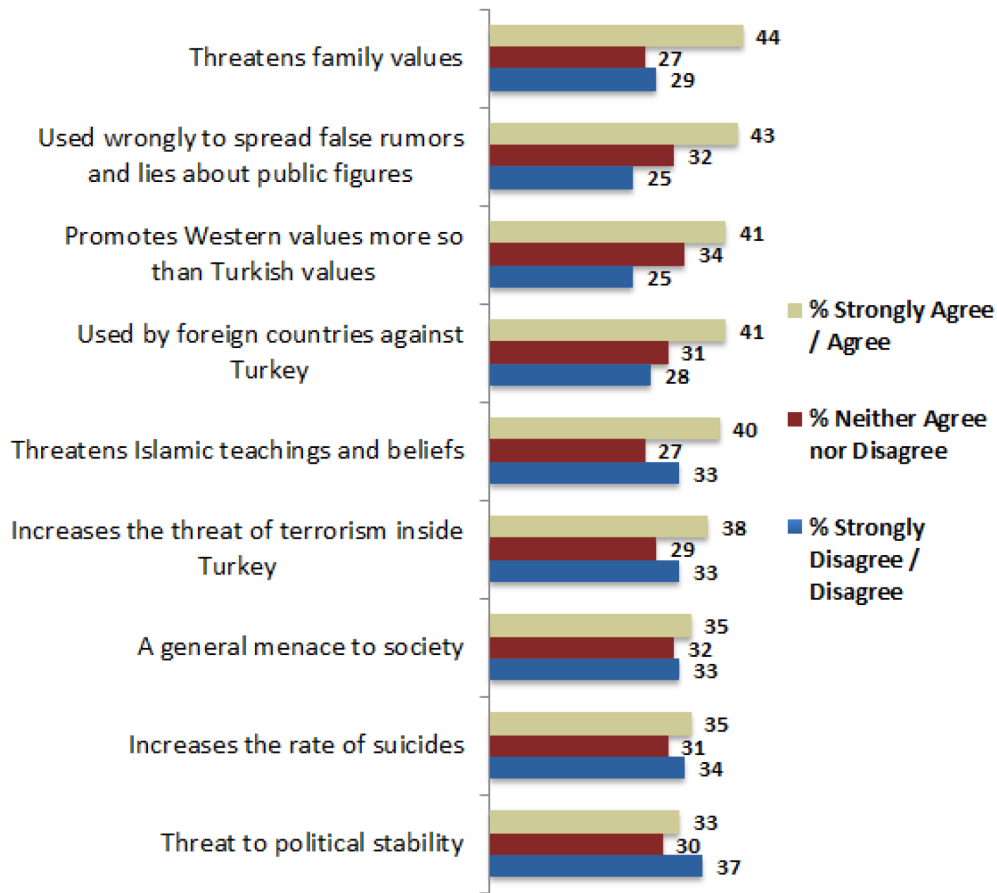
Likewise, almost half of non-users (45%) believe social media threatens Islamic teachings and beliefs while the plurality of light (39%) and heavy (44%) Internet users think otherwise. The biggest divisions across Internet use segments were on the questions of whether social media threatened political stability (34% of non-users

agreed vs. 49% of heavy Internet users disagreed), social media increased the rate of suicides (39% of non-users agreed vs. 46% of heavy Internet users disagreed), and whether social media was overall a general menace to society (38% of non-users agreed vs. 45% of heavy Internet users disagreed).

However, there was also agreement across all levels of Internet use on some aspects of social media that Turkish citizens found threatening. For example, pluralities of non-users (43%), light users (46%), and heavy users (43%) believed that social media was used wrongly to spread false rumors and lies about public figures. There was also a great deal of agreement, similarly, across Internet use segments that social media promotes Western values more so than Turkish values (41% of non-users, 46% of light users, and 39% of heavy users agreed) and that it increased the threat of terrorism inside Turkey (40% of non-users, 40% of light users, and 38% of heavy users agreed). In short, Internet is primarily seen as a threat by non-users.



**FIGURE 6: PERCEIVED THREAT FROM THE SOCIAL MEDIA**



**TABLE 4: PERCEIVED THREAT FROM THE SOCIAL MEDIA BY FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE** (percentage of total respondents, single response)

Type of Threat	Frequency of Internet Use					
	% of Non-Users Agree/Disagree		% of Light Users Agree/Disagree			
<b>Socio-Cultural Threats of Social Media</b>						
Threatens family values	49	21	24	46	37	42
Promotes Western values more so than Turkish values	41	19	46	21	39	35
Threatens Islamic teachings and beliefs	45	26	30	39	34	44
Increases the rate of suicides	39	26	30	37	32	46
A general menace to society	38	23	36	39	32	45
<b>Political Threats of Social Media</b>						
Used by foreign countries against Turkey	43	22	40	28	36	40
Used wrongly spread false rumors and lies about public figures	43	17	46	27	43	34
Increases the threat of terrorism inside Turkey	40	25	40	33	38	33
Threat to political stability	34	27	35	39	30	49

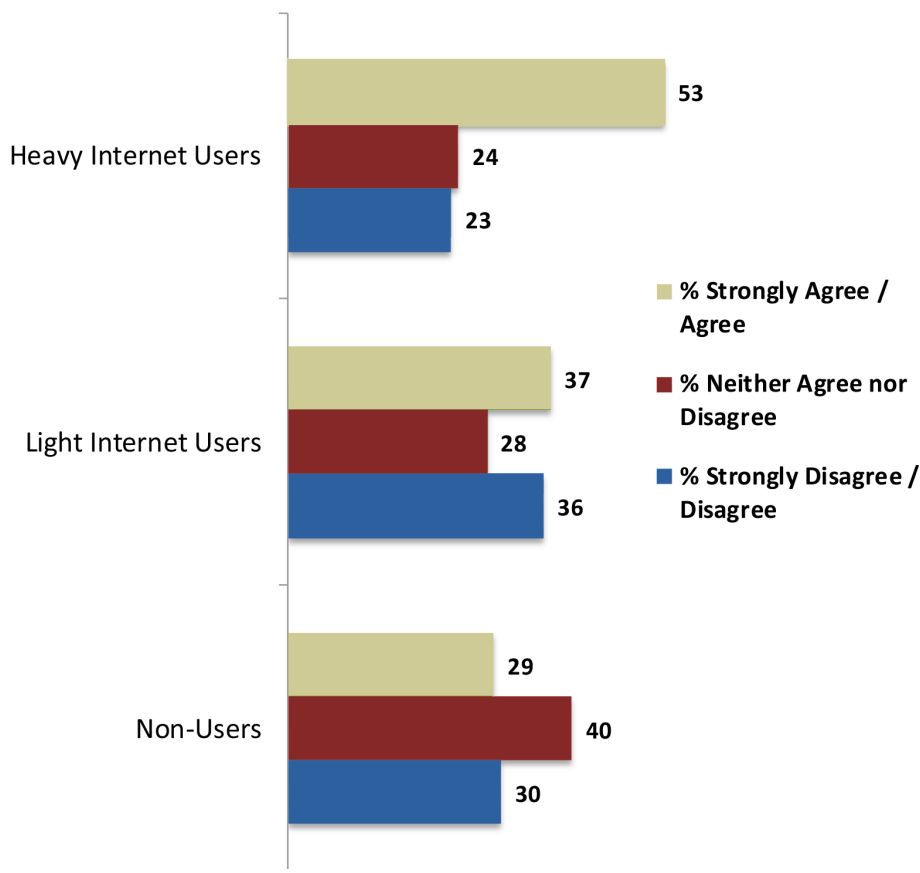
## Turkish Demand for Internet Freedom

Survey respondents were asked two different sets of questions about Internet censorship and freedom. The first asked respondents to assess *demand* for Internet freedom (how much Internet freedom they wanted) while the second set of questions asked respondents to assess the *perceived supply* (how much Internet freedom they enjoyed) in Turkey.<sup>12</sup> By comparing demand for Internet freedom with perceived supply in Turkey, we can assess the degree of to which there is a democratic deficit (demand outweighing supply) of Internet freedom in Turkey from a citizen perspective. Respondents were first asked an overarching question about whether they agreed or disagreed with having the In-

ternet entirely free from censorship. Figure 7 depicts their preference by frequency of Internet use segment.

Overall, 39% of Turkish citizens believe the Internet should be completely free of government censorship while a bit over a quarter (29%) disagrees with this viewpoint. Though as Figure 7 depicts, there is substantial variation by frequency of Internet use. For example, 53% of heavy Internet users believe the Internet should be completely free compared to 37% of light users and 29% of non-users. Interestingly, a higher percentage of light Internet users (36%) disagreed with a completely uncensored Internet than heavy users (23%) or non-users (30%).

**FIGURE 7: AGREEMENT WITH INTERNET ENTIRELY FREE FROM CENSORSHIP BY FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE SEGMENTS (percentage of total respondents, single response)**

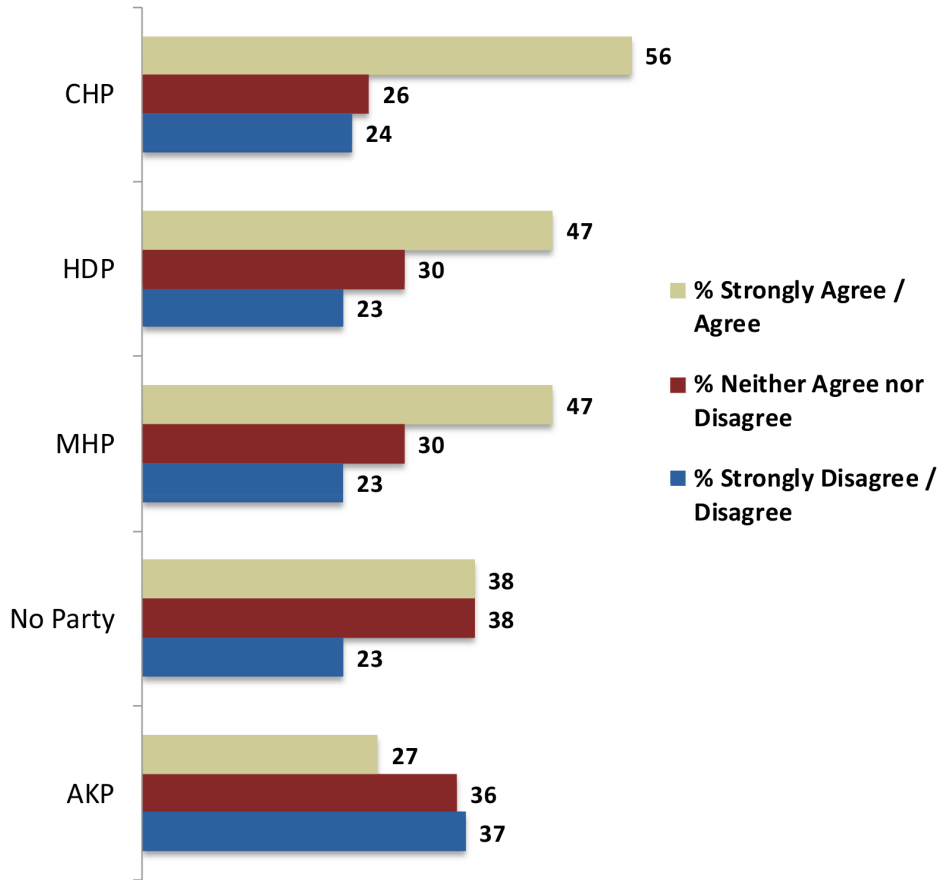


In recent years, Internet censorship has become a highly politically polarized issue in Turkey, and is viewed by many affiliated with the AKP dominated government as a major tool of the political opposition. This polarization is reflected in Figure 8 which depicts the distribution of opinion about Internet censorship by political party support.

A majority (56%) of CHP supporters agree with a completely uncensored Internet (56%) followed by pluralities of MHP and HDP supporters (each 47%) while about a quarter of supporters in each party disagree. In contrast to these opposition parties, AKP supporters are the least likely (27%) to support a completely open Internet and in fact a plurality of AKP supporters (37%) disagrees with this view. Turkish citizens who do not support any party are equally split into those who agree with a completely free Internet and those who are ambivalent (38% each) and a smaller percentage who disagree (23%).

<sup>12</sup> see Nisbet, E.C. & Stoycheff, E. (2013). Let the people speak: a multi-level model of supply and demand for press freedom. *Communication Research*. 40(5), 720-741 doi: 10.1177/0093650211429117

**FIGURE 8: AGREEMENT WITH INTERNET ENTIRELY FREE FROM CENSORSHIP OF INTERNET CENSORSHIP BY POLITICAL PARTY SUPPORT (percentage of total respondents, single reponse)**



In 2014, the Turkish parliament initiated new legislation that placed several new restrictions on Internet content, gave additional powers to the government to block websites without court orders, and required Internet providers to make available two years of user data immediately upon request.<sup>13,14</sup> Therefore, a second survey question asked respondents more specifically about whether they generally supported or opposed recent Internet restrictions and censorship initiated by the Turkish government.

Figure 9 shows the distribution of support for these restrictions by frequency of Internet use. Overall support for these recent restrictions on users is low with

22% of Turkish citizens supporting the government's censorship compared to 48% of Turkish citizens opposing it and 30% of Turkish citizens indifferent to it. Almost two-thirds of heavy Internet users (63%) and nearly one-half (49%) of light Internet users oppose the government's recent censorship of the Internet while in comparison 19% and 17% support it, respectively. A plurality of non-users (38%) also opposes the Turkish government's recent restrictions on Internet freedom while about one-quarter (25%) support it.

Support for recent restrictions on Internet freedom by the Turkish government is also highly polarized by political party support as Figure 10 illustrates. Nearly three-fourths (74%) of CHP supporters and two-thirds (62%) of MHP supporters oppose the government's censorship of the Internet while only about one-in-ten in each party (9% in CHP and 10% in MHP) support it. Though a plurality (38%) of AKP supporters back the government's recent Internet censorship a sizable percentage (28%) also oppose it.

<sup>13</sup> "Turkey pushes through new raft of 'draconian' internet restrictions," Constanze Letsch, *The Guardian*, 6 February 2014, Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/06/turkey-internet-law-censorship-democracy-threat-opposition>

<sup>14</sup> "The Struggle for Turkey's Internet" special report by Freedom House; see <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-reports/struggle-turkeys-internet>

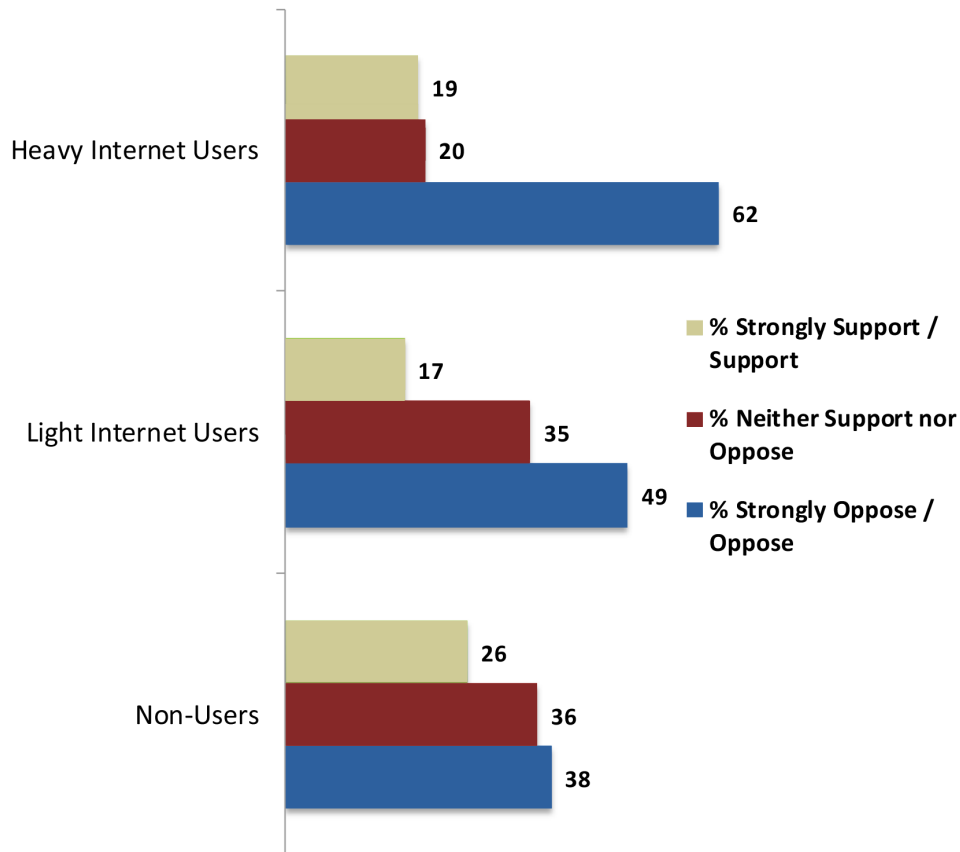
The next set of questions posed to respondents asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the government censoring different types of Internet content, specifically: a) content that advocates minority rights; b) content that attacks the government; c) pornographic or sexually explicit content; d) content that damages political leaders' reputation, e) content that criticizes Islam, f) content used to organize protests against the government; h) content that insults Turkish national values or history. Table 5 provides the percentage of Turkish citizens who agree, disagree, or neither agree nor disagree that each type of Internet content should be censored by the Turkish government by frequency of Internet use.

The vast majority of Turkish citizens across all Internet use segments (about 70% in each segment) agree that pornographic or sexually explicit Internet content should be censored. There is also very little variance by frequency of Internet use in the percentage of Turkish citizens who support government censorship of online content that criticizes Islam (51% of non-users,

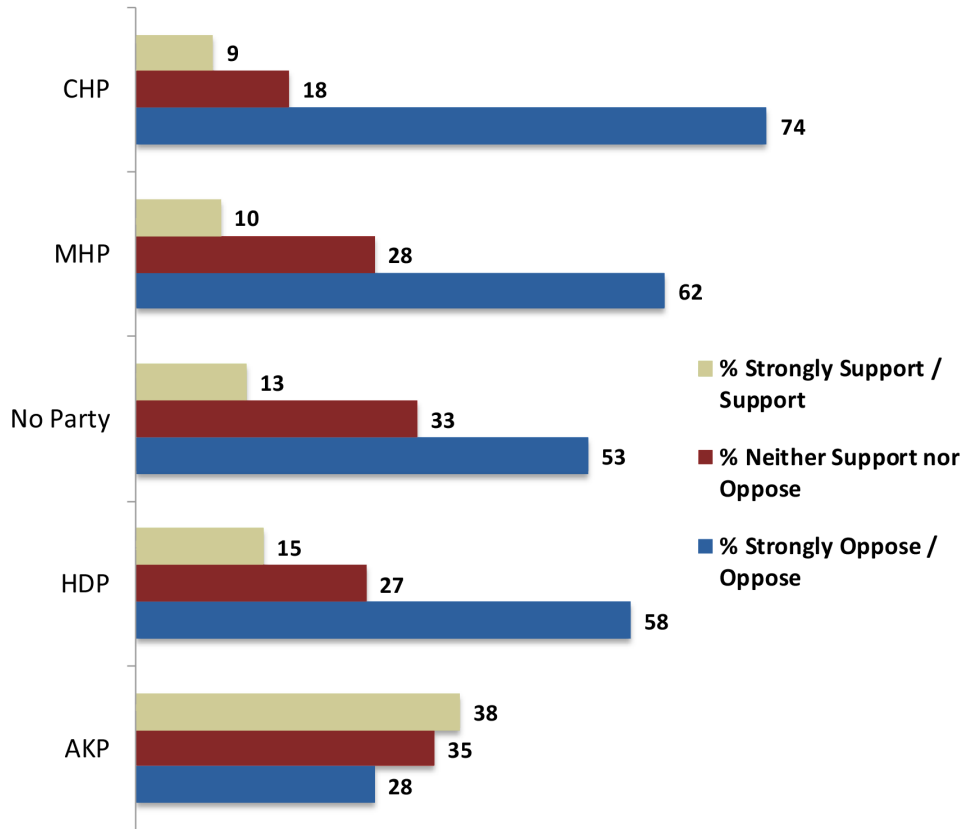
48% of both light and heavy Internet users) though the percentage of people in Turkey who oppose such censorship is higher among light (33%) and heavy (35%) Internet users compared to non-users (24%). A similar pattern emerges when Turkish citizens are asked about online content that insults Turkish national values or history with pluralities of non-users (43%) and light Internet users (41%) supporting the censorship of such content and heavy Internet users evenly split on the issue (39% for censorship, 40% against).

Among people living in Turkey, support for the censorship of political content appears to be generally lower than support for censoring socio-cultural content across all three Internet use segments. Non-users are about evenly split (36% for censorship vs. 31% against) on whether to censor online content that damages a leader's reputation while small pluralities of light users (37%) and heavy Internet users (45%) are against such censorship. Internet non-users are highly polarized on whether the government should censor online content used to organize anti-government protests (31% for

**FIGURE 9: SUPPORT FOR RECENT GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS ON INTERNET BY FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE SEGMENTS (percentage of total respondents, single response)**



**FIGURE 10: SUPPORT FOR RECENT GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS ON INTERNET BY PARTY SUPPORT** (percentage of total respondents, single reponse)



ensorship and 36% against). In comparison there are about twice as many light (49% vs. 28%) and heavy Internet users (50% vs. 25%) opposed to censoring online content promoting anti-government protests as there are supporting it.

Across all three Internet use segments there is little support among Turkish citizens for government censorship of online content that attacks the government or advocates for minority rights. About half of Internet non-users (48%) oppose censoring content that advocates minority rights as compared to about one-in-five who favor it (22%). Majorities of light (57%) and heavy (57%) Internet users are also against censoring online content that advocates for minority rights. Attitudes toward censoring online content that attacks the government exhibit a similar pattern with about half of non-users (47%) and light users (55%), and nearly two-thirds of heavy Internet users (64%), opposed to censorship of anti-government content posted online. Attitudes toward censorship not only vary significantly by frequency of Internet use but they also vary based on which political party Turkish citizens support as exhibited in Table 6. Across political parties there is wide

agreement that pornographic or sexually explicit content should be censored by the government (ranging from 55% to 78% across parties). However, the parties divide across a liberal/conservative spectrum on whether online content criticizing Islam should be censored. A majority of AKP (61%) and MHP (61%) supporters agree that Internet content criticizing Islam should be banned while pluralities of CHP (47%) and HDP (44%) disagree. A similar liberal/conservative divide emerges when considering online content that may insult Turkish national values or history. The majority of MHP (60%) and AKP (52%) supporters agree the government should ban this content while about half of CHP (47%) and HDP (50%) supporters disagree.

When it comes to online political content the parties also differ in important ways. Pluralities of AKP supporters support banning content that damages political leaders' reputations (46%) or is used to organize anti-government protests (42%). In comparison, the three opposition parties disagree with censoring these types of content. Almost two-thirds (63%) of CHP supporters and pluralities of MHP (45%) and HDP (48%) disagree with censoring content that is used to promote

**TABLE 5: SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT CENSORSHIP OF SPECIFIC TYPES OF INTERNET CONTENT BY FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE (percentage of total respondents, single response)**

Type of Threat	Frequency of Internet Use					
	% of Non-Users Agree/Disagree		% of Light Users Agree/Disagree		% of Heavy Users Agree/Disagree	
<b>Socio-Cultural Content</b>						
Pornographic or sexually explicit content	72	10	70	14	69	15
Criticizes Islam	51	24	48	33	48	35
Insults Turkish national values /history	43	28	41	33	39	40
<b>Political Content</b>						
Damages political leaders' reputation	36	31	30	37	31	45
Used to organize protests against the government	31	36	28	49	25	50
Attacks the government	25	47	20	55	22	64
Advocates minority rights	22	48	18	57	20	57

**TABLE 6: SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT CENSORSHIP OF SPECIFIC TYPES OF INTERNET CONTENT BY PARTY SUPPORT (percentage of total respondents, single response)**

Type of Content	Party Support									
	% of AKP Agree/Disagree		% of CHP Agree/Disagree		% of MHP Agree/Disagree		% of HDP Agree/Disagree		% of No Party Agree/Disagree	
<b>Socio-Cultural Content</b>										
Pornographic or sexually explicit content	78	9	66	18	72	9	55	19	68	12
Criticizes Islam	61	19	38	43	61	20	33	44	49	20
Insults Turkish national values /history	52	23	30	47	60	18	20	50	35	36
<b>Political Content</b>										
Damages political leaders' reputation	46	24	19	57	30	41	29	41	26	38
Used to organize protests against the government	42	27	16	63	30	45	18	48	21	48
Attacks the government	30	42	15	70	18	62	18	60	20	57
Advocates minority rights	27	46	13	68	21	43	9	64	20	50

anti-government protests. Similarly, a majority of CHP supports (57%) and pluralities of MHP (41%) and HDP (41%) supporters oppose censoring content that may damage political leader's reputations.

However, there is agreement across the political spectrum that the Turkish government should not censor certain some types of political content. The majority of CHP (70%), MHP (62%), and HDP (60%) supporters and a plurality of AKP supporters (42%) are opposed to censoring online content that attacks the government. Opinion about online content that advocates minority

rights in Turkey also exhibits a similar pattern with majorities of CHP (68%) and HDP (64%) supporters and pluralities of AKP (46%) and MHP (43%) disagreeing that this content should be censored.

The last set of questions regarding demand for Internet freedom paralleled the dimensions of Internet freedom measured by the Freedom House organization's annual "Freedom of the Net" report.<sup>15</sup> Freedom House scores countries on economic and legal obstacles to Internet

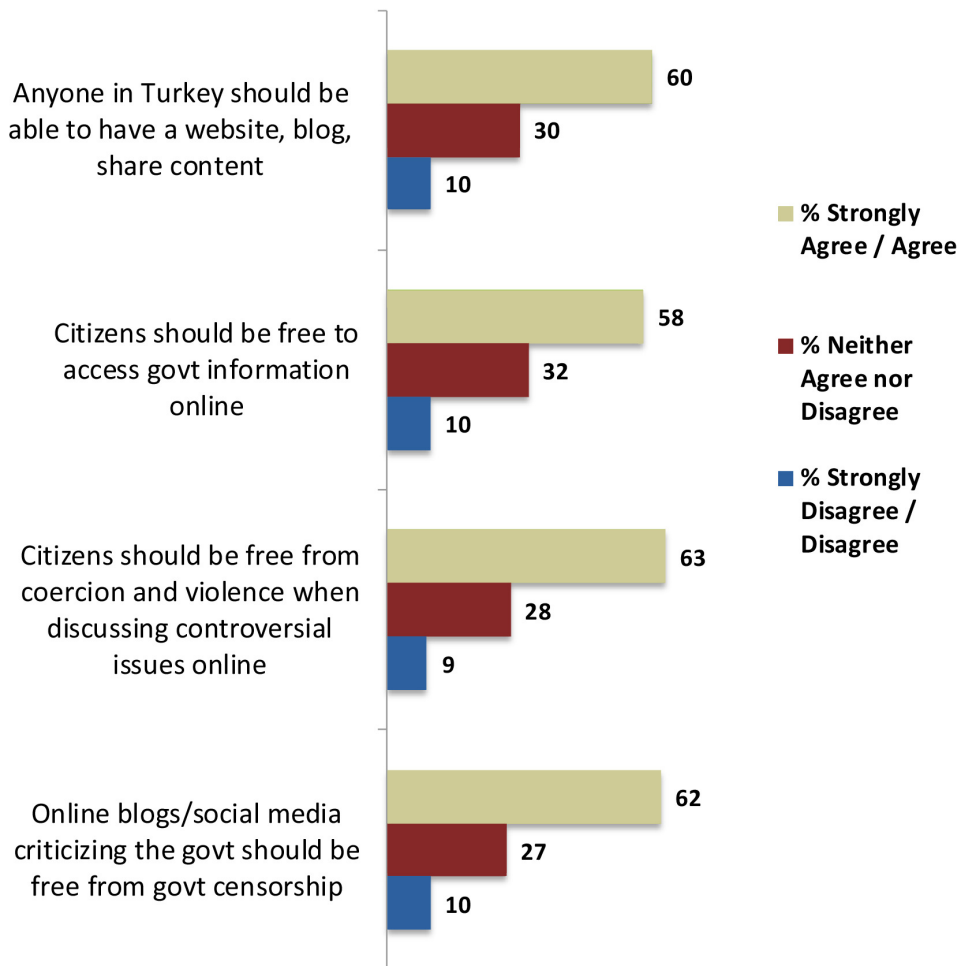
<sup>15</sup> See "Freedom of the Net 2014" report at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/freedom-net-2014>

access, violations of Internet user rights, and limits on online content.<sup>16</sup> Survey respondents were asked their agreement with four statements: a) online blogs and social media criticizing the government should be free from government censorship, b) citizens should be free from coercion and violence when discussing and conveying controversial issues online, c) citizens should be free to access government information online, and d) anyone in Turkey should be able to have a website, blog, or share content online. Figure 11 below provides the distribution of agreement and disagreement with each statement across all respondents.

Figure 11 illustrates that a large majority of Turkish citizens demand Internet freedom in each of the dimensions queried. The greatest demand is for citizens to be free from government coercion and violence when expressing themselves online (63%) followed by online blogs and social media being free from government censorship (62%). These are followed by a majority agreeing that anyone in Turkey should be able have a presence online (60%) and that citizens should have access to government information online (58%). Only a small minority of Turkish citizens in each case (9-10%) oppose these Internet freedoms. These opinion patterns are the same across a range of demographic characteristics including frequency of Internet use and political party support.

16 See Freedom House rating methodology at <https://freedom-house.org/report/freedom-net/2014/methodology>

**FIGURE 11: DEMAND FOR POLITICAL, LEGAL, ECONOMIC INTERNET FREEDOM (percentage of total respondents, single response)**



## Perceived Supply of Turkish Internet Freedom

As noted, in addition to questions asking Turkish citizens how much they demand or value Internet freedom or support Internet censorship, the survey also asked respondents about their perceptions about how much the Internet is currently censored in Turkey and risks of political expression – or in other words the perceived supply of Internet freedom in Turkey.

The first question asked of respondents was whether the Internet was free and open or censored, in their opinion, in Turkey? Out of all the respondents, 46% responded that it was very censored or censored, 25% responded that it was neither free nor censored, and 30% responded that the Internet was very free or free in Turkey. However this evaluation of the overall amount of Internet freedom in Turkey varied substantially by frequency of Internet use segment as illustrated in Figure 12.

Almost two-thirds (61%) of heavy Internet users perceive the Internet in Turkey as very censored or censored as compared to about half (51%) of light Internet users and one third (33%) of non-users. On the flip side, roughly the same size minorities of Internet non-users (31%), light users (31%), and heavy users (38%) view the Internet as very free or free.

However, as the Internet and social media have become increasingly recognized as alternative means of information and political mobilization to the heavily government-influenced mass media, Internet censorship has become a rather politicized issue in Turkey. Therefore views on how much the Internet is free of government censorship diverge greatly across supporters of the major political parties in Turkey as exhibited in Figure 13.

Almost half (47%) of AKP supporters perceive the Internet as very free or free in Turkey while 29% believe that it is very censored or censored. These views are the complete opposite of those who support the opposition parties or no party at all. For instance, roughly two-thirds of CHP (69%) and HDP (62%) supporters and about one-half of MHP (54%) and those that support no party (47%) perceive the Internet as very censored or censored. About a quarter or less (ranging from 15% of

HDP supporters to 23% of MHP supporters) in each of these groups perceive the Internet as free or very free. This pattern of perceptions about Internet freedom in Turkey, in turn, may influence Internet users' perceived risk associated with online privacy and expressing their political opinions and beliefs online. The survey asked Turkish Internet users whether they agreed or disagreed with three statements that address such concerns: a) I avoid certain websites, blogs, online conversations, etc., due to online monitoring by the government, b) I am afraid to openly share with others online what I think about some political topics, c) I worry about my privacy when using commercial websites.

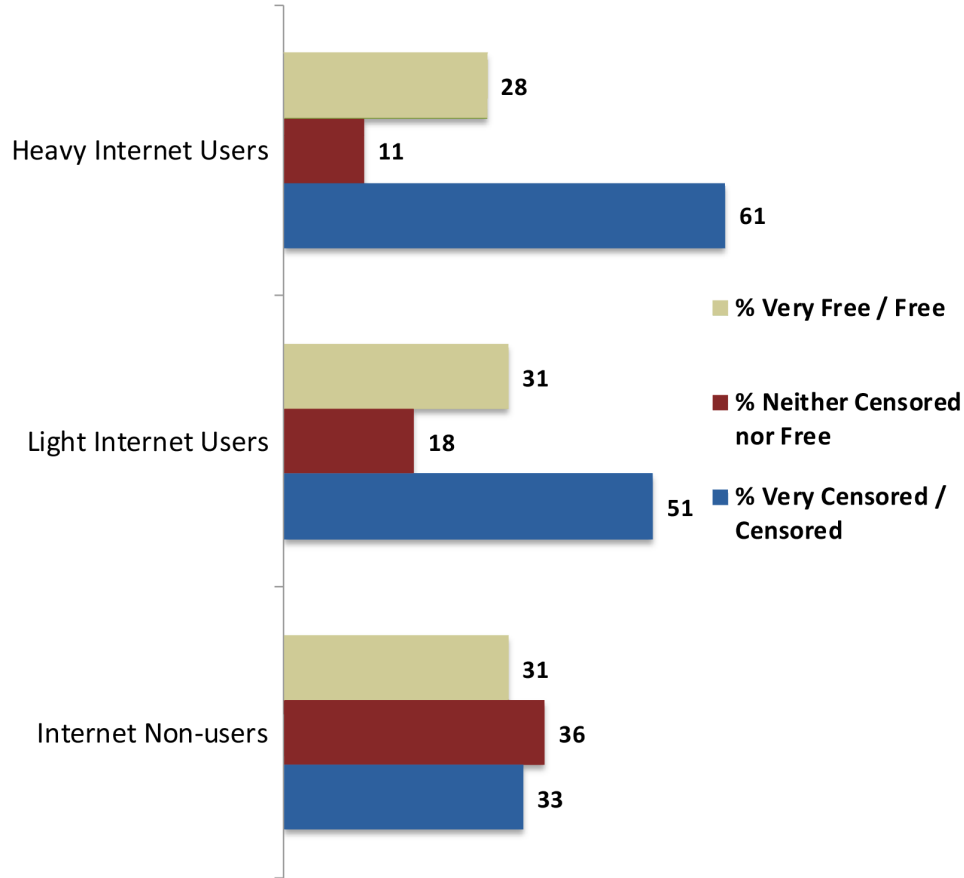
About one-third (33%) of Turkish Internet users agree that they avoid certain websites, blogs, online conversations, etc., due to online monitoring by the government. Nearly one third (30%) of Turkish citizens are also afraid to openly share with others online what they think about some political topics. However 41% of Internet users disagree they do so in each case. A larger percentage of Internet users agree they worry about their privacy when using commercial websites (44%) while a smaller proportion (29%) disagree that they worry about their privacy.

However, across different political party supporters, these perceptions of risk vary greatly. The distribution of agreement and disagreement with each statement by political party support is exhibited in Table 7. As a pattern, AKP supporters perceived significantly less risk to online expression and privacy as compared to supporters of the main opposition parties and those who support no party. Majorities of AKP supporters disagree that they avoid certain websites, blogs, and online conversations due to online monitoring by the government (52%) and are afraid to openly share with others online what they think about some political topics (54%) while about a quarter of AKP supporters (25% and 22%, respectively) agree with either statement.

CHP supporters, in comparison, are evenly divided (37% both agree and disagree) on whether they avoid certain websites, blogs, and online conversations due to online monitoring by the government. Likewise MHP supporters (37% agree vs. 43% disagree) and those



**FIGURE 12: OVERALL PERCEIVED SUPPLY OF INTERNET FREEDOM BY FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE (percentage of total respondents, single response)**



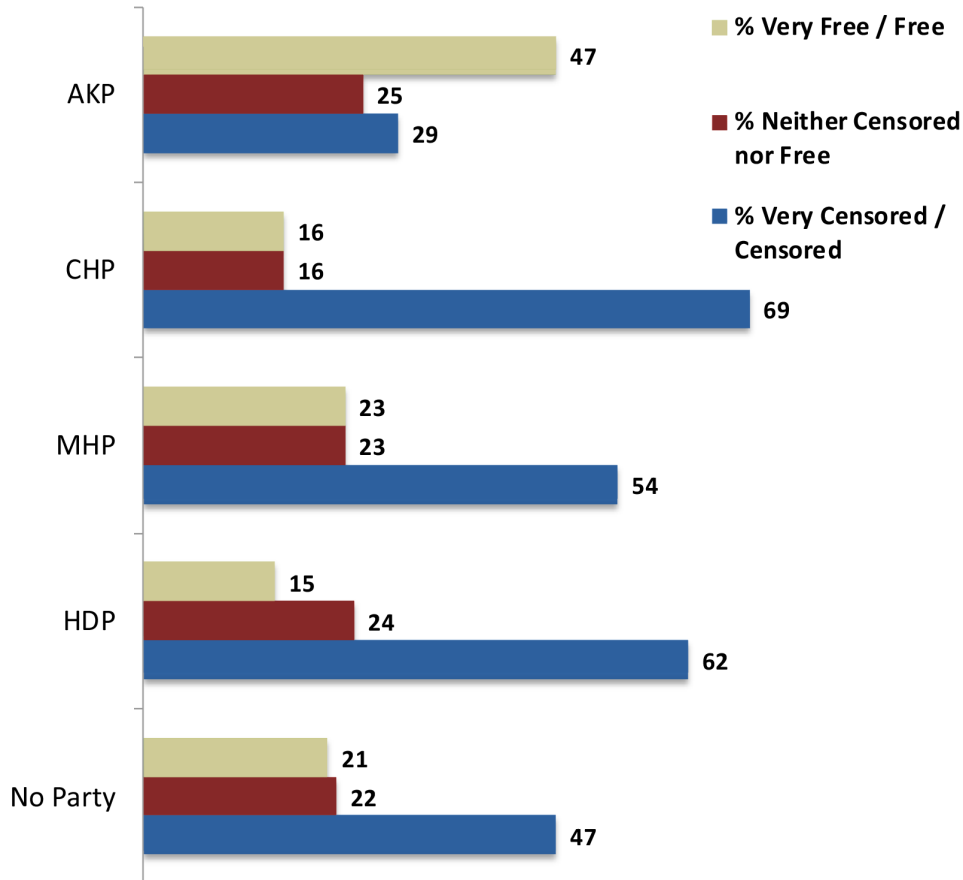
who support no party (34% agree vs. 36% disagree) are also equally divided on this question. The exception are HDP supporters, who are primarily composed of ethnic Kurds, for whom 45% agree they avoid certain websites, blogs, and online conversations versus 26% disagree.

Again a very similar pattern of opinions among supporters of the opposition parties and those who support no party emerge when considering fears of openly sharing with others online what they think about some political topics. While 38% of CHP supporters disagree that they are afraid to share openly what they think about politics online another nearly third (32%) of CHP supporters are afraid. Supporters of the MHP agree (36%) and disagree (34%) with this statement about equal numbers and so do those who do not support any party (34% agree vs. 35% disagree). HDP supporters are again those who perceive the most risk with 39% agreeing that they are afraid to openly share with oth-

ers online what they think about some political topics as compared to 23% who disagree.

Interestingly, though not an overtly political context, AKP supporters are also the least likely to worry about their online privacy when using commercial websites (38%) as compared to CHP supporters (44%), MHP supporters (56%), HDP supporters (54%), and those who support no party (47%). Furthermore, they are the only group of political supporters who are more likely not to worry about their privacy online (41%) as compared to the others for whom 17% to 28% reporting not worrying about their online privacy. In other words, the heavily Kurdish voters of the HDP appear to be worried about their privacy on the internet while the AKP constituency is more relaxed about these risks.

The last set of questions querying respondents' perceived supply of Internet freedom again parallels the dimensions of Internet freedom measured by the Free-

**FIGURE 13: OVERALL PERCEIVED SUPPLY OF INTERNET FREEDOM BY POLITICAL PARTY SUPPORT (percentage of total respondents, single reponse)****TABLE 7: PERCEIVED RISKS TO ONLINE PRIVACY AND EXPRESSION (percentage of Internet users only, single reponse)**

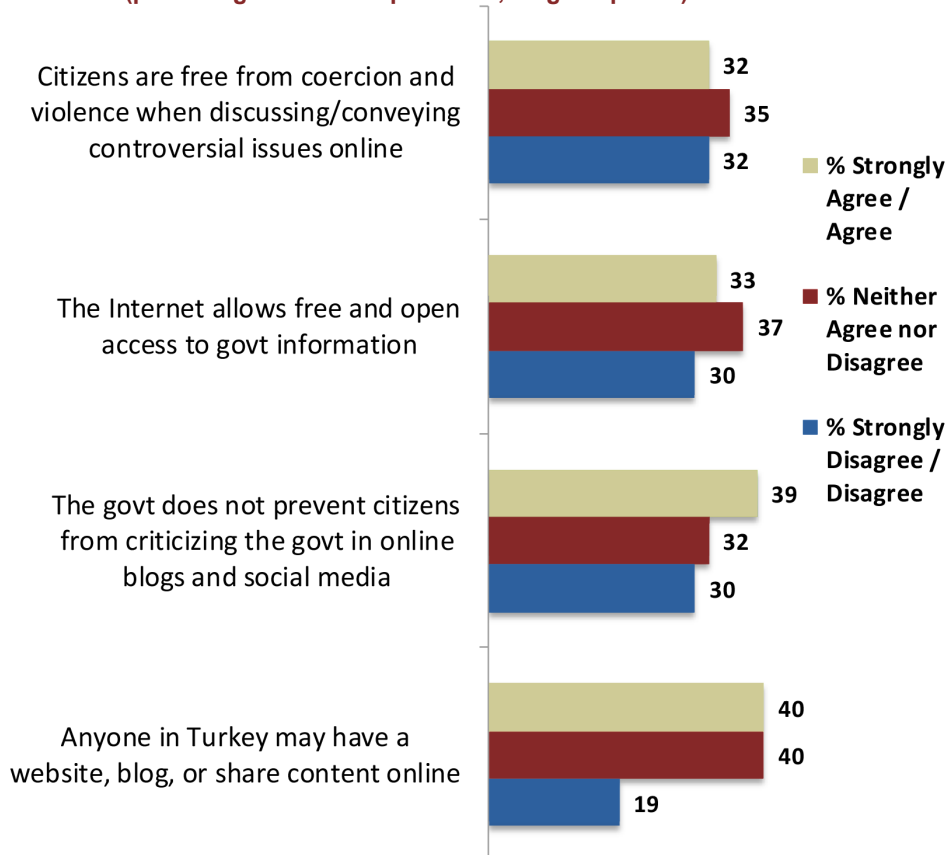
Type of Risk	Party Support									
	% of AKP Agree/ Disagree		% of CHP Agree/ Disagree		% of MHP Agree/ Disagree		% of HDP Agree/ Disagree		% of No Party Agree/ Disagree	
I avoid certain websites, blogs, online conversations due to online monitoring by the government	25	52	37	37	37	43	45	26	34	36
I am afraid to openly share with others online what I think about some political topics	22	54	32	38	36	34	39	23	34	35
I worry about my privacy when using commercial websites.	38	41	44	28	56	24	54	17	47	20

dom House organization. These survey items closely match the wording of the same questions tapping Turkish citizens' demand for Internet freedom from the previous section.

Survey respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with each of the following statements describing the Internet in Turkey: a) the government does not prevent citizens from criticizing the government in online blogs and social media, b) citizens are free from coercion and violence when discussing and conveying controversial issues online, c) the Internet allows free and open access to government information, and d) anyone in Turkey may have a website, blog, or share content online. Figure 14 provides the distribution of agreement and disagreement with each statement across all respondents.

Turkish citizens are heavily polarized in their perception of how much Internet freedom they possess across three of the dimensions. For instance, roughly a third of people residing in Turkey (32%) agree that citizens are free from coercion and violence when discussing and conveying controversial issues online while the same percentage (32%) disagree with this evaluation and 35% neither agree nor disagree. Similar patterns of opinion exist when considering whether the Internet allows free and open access to government information (33% agree vs. 30% disagree) and the government does not prevent citizens from criticizing the government in online blogs and social media (39% agree vs. 30% disagree). However, when it comes to ownership and the ability to publish online about twice the percentage of Turkish citizens (40%) agree that anyone in Turkey may have a website, blog, or share content online as those who disagree (19%).

**FIGURE 14: PERCEIVED SUPPLY OF POLITICAL, LEGAL, ECONOMIC INTERNET FREEDOM (percentage of total respondents, single reponse)**



**TABLE 8: PERCEIVED SUPPLY OF POLITICAL, LEGAL, ECONOMIC INTERNET FREEDOM BY POLITICAL PARTY SUPPORT (percentage of Internet users only, single response)**

Type of Internet Freedom	Party Support									
	% of AKP Agree/ Disagree		% of CHP Agree/ Disagree		% of MHP Agree/ Disagree		% of HDP Agree/ Disagree		% of No Party Agree/ Disagree	
Citizens free from coercion and violence when discussing controversial issues online	42	21	27	40	26	36	32	35	23	42
The Internet allows free and open access to govt. information	43	21	29	38	27	33	32	31	24	38
The govt. does not prevent citizens from criticizing the govt. in online blogs and social media	44	23	36	36	43	33	40	30	31	34
Anyone in Turkey may have a website, blog, or share content online	45	15	40	20	45	16	33	24	33	23

Yet, as we have seen in other areas of perceived supply of Internet freedom, there also exists a large perceptual divide on the amount of Internet freedom Turkish citizens enjoy across supporters of different political parties. Table 8 illustrates the political polarization around evaluation of Internet freedom in Turkey.

Supporters of the political parties are most polarized around perceptions of whether citizens are free from coercion and violence when discussing controversial issues online and the ability to freely access government information online. The plurality (42%) of AKP supporters agree that citizens are free from coercion and violence when expressing themselves online while a small percentage disagree (21%). Pluralities of AKP supporters also agree that the Internet allows free and open access to government information (43%) and the government does not prevent citizens from openly criticizing the government online (44%) while percentages of AKP supporters also disagree with these views (21% and 23%, respectively).

In contrast, the perceptions of the supporters of the major opposition parties and those with no party affiliation are the mirror image of AKP supporters when it comes to evaluations of how much political and legal Internet freedom exists in Turkey. For instance, pluralities of CHP (40%), MHP (36%), HDP (35%) supporters and those without party affiliation (42%) all disagree with the view that citizens are free from coercion and violence when expressing themselves online.

Pluralities of CHP (38%) and MHP (33%) supporters and those who do not identify with a party (38%) also disagree that the Internet allows open and free access to government information. Compared to the AKP, the opposition party supporters and unaffiliated also disagree at higher percentages (36% CHP, 33% MHP, 30% HDP, 34% unaffiliated) that the citizens are not prevented from criticizing the government online.

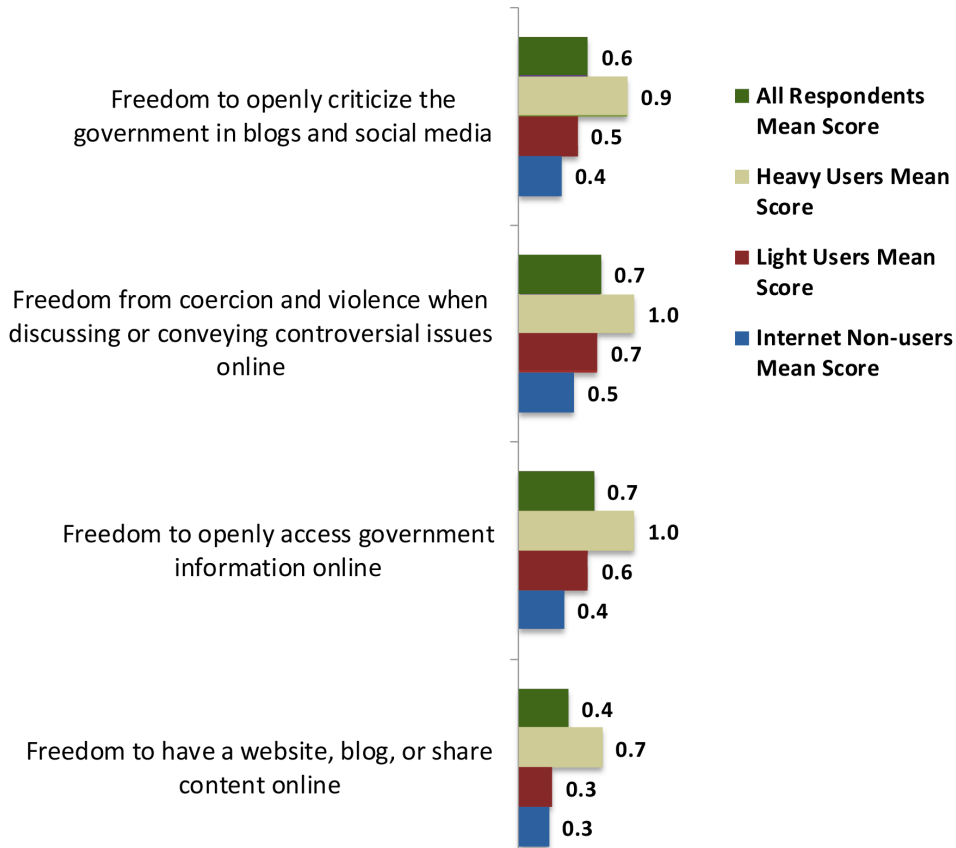
One area of consensus among supporters of the AKP (40%), CHP (40%), and MHP (45%) is that anyone in Turkey may have a website, blog, or share content online. However, supporters of the primarily ethnic Kurdish HDP party are substantially less likely to agree with this view (33%) as well as those who do not support any party (33%).

# Democratic Deficit in Turkish Internet Freedoms

By comparing Turkish citizens' demand for political, legal, and economic Internet freedoms to their evaluations of perceived supply of the same freedoms, we are able to chart the size of the democratic deficit in Internet freedom within Turkey. We do so by subtracting the measures of perceived supply (scored on a five point Likert scale that ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree) from our measures of demand for Internet freedom measured on the same scale for each dimension of Internet freedom.

The resulting scores will range from -4 to +4. If a positive score results, then demand outweighs perceived supply and a democratic deficit exists. If the score is zero then demand and perceived supply are in equilibrium and a negative score means that there is an abundance of Internet freedom in the eyes of the respondent. The resulting mean scores for each of the four dimensions of Internet freedom we queried by Internet use segments and all respondents are displayed in Figure 15.

**FIGURE 15: DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT OF POLITICAL, LEGAL, ECONOMIC INTERNET FREEDOMS BY FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE (percentage of total respondents, single response)**



As a whole respondents experience the largest democratic deficits (the gap between how much Turkish citizens want Internet freedom versus how much Internet freedom they think they possess) about freedom from coercion and violence when discussing controversial issues online (all respondents mean =.7) and freedom to openly access government information online (all respondents mean=.7). The lowest mean democratic deficit is for the freedom to have a website, blog, or share content online (mean=.4).

Not surprisingly, heavy Internet users experience the highest democratic deficits in Internet freedom with mean deficit scores across all four areas ranging between .7 and 1.0, especially the freedom from coercion and violence when engaging in online discussions and the freedom to access government information online. Non-users of the Internet perceive very little democratic deficit in regards to Internet freedoms with their mean scores ranging from one-third (mean=.3) to one-half (mean=.5) of heavy Internet users. In general, light users' democratic deficits are also small with their mean scores mirroring those of non-users more so than heavy users and range from .3 to .7.

By summing and then averaging respondents' scores for the four Internet freedoms into one overall index of Turkish demand for Internet freedom and doing the same for perceived supply of Internet freedom, and then again subtracting the overall supply from overall demand, we may assess the global democratic deficit that Turkish citizens experience on the issue of Internet freedom. Furthermore, we also can chart this overall score by political party support in order to evaluate how Internet freedom democratic deficits vary by political affiliation as exhibited in Figure 16.

The mean global democratic deficit in Internet freedom experienced by all respondents is .6 based on these calculations. AKP supporters experience a very low democratic deficit with their deficit close to zero (mean=.2) where their demand for Internet freedom closely equals their perceived supply of Internet freedom. In contrast, the mean democratic deficit in Internet freedom for CHP supporters is five times as high (mean=1.0) as AKP supporters. Similarly the democratic deficit for MHP supporters (mean=.8), HDP supporters (mean=.7), and the unaffiliated (mean=.8) are about four times as large as AKP supporters.

**FIGURE 16: GLOBAL INTERNET FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT BY POLITICAL PARTY SUPPORT (percentage of total respondents. single response)**



## Internet Blockage and Circumvention

In March 2014 the Turkish government put a politically controversial block initially on Twitter and then later on YouTube within Turkey.<sup>17</sup> President Erdogan, prime minister at the time, publicly vowed to “wipe out” Twitter as it had been used to release politically damaging allegations against him and his associates shortly before the March 2014 local elections in Turkey.<sup>18</sup> Information on how to circumvent these blockages was widely publicized online, on posters, in newspapers, and even on sides of buildings until the blockages of each were lifted over a month later.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore we asked survey respondents a series of questions about their familiarity and attitudes about these Internet blockages and whether Internet users engaged in any Internet circumvention behaviors. Respondents were first asked two questions: a) how familiar they were with the Turkish government blocking the social media platform Twitter on March 20, 2014 and b) how familiar they were with the Turkish government blocking the video posting and streaming website YouTube on March 27, 2014.

Figure 17 provides the percentages of Turkish citizens who know a great deal, are familiar but do not know all the details, have heard something about it, and those who never heard about/were not aware of the blockage. Roughly a quarter of the Turkish public report knowing a great deal about the YouTube (21%) and Twitter (25%) blockages that began in March 2014. Another roughly quarter of Turkish citizens is familiar with the blockages (24% for each platform) but did not know all the details. The remainder of respondents, comprising a bit over half the population, had heard something (26% for YouTube and 24% for Twitter) or nothing at all (29% for YouTube and 26% for Twitter).

17 “Turkey blocks YouTube days after Twitter crackdown,” Gul Tuysuz and Ivan Watson, *CNN*, 28 March 2014, Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2014/03/27/world/europe/turkey-youtube-blocked/>

18 “Twitter is blocked in Turkey as Erdogan vows to ‘wipe out’ the social network,” Agencies, *The Telegraph*, 21 March 2014, Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/10713393/Twitter-is-blocked-in-Turkey-as-Erdogan-vows-to-wipe-out-the-social-network.html>

19 “Circumventing the Turkish Twitter crackdown,” Hari Sreenivasan, *PBS Newshour*, 22 March 2014, Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/runtdown/circumventing-turkish-twitter-crackdown/>

However awareness of the bans varied substantially by frequency of Internet usage. Half (50%) of heavy Internet users and 20% of light Internet users reported knowing a great deal about the blockage of Twitter compared to 8% of non-users. For the YouTube blockage the pattern was the same with 42% of heavy and 20% of light Internet users reporting knowing a great deal about the YouTube ban compared to 6% of non-users.

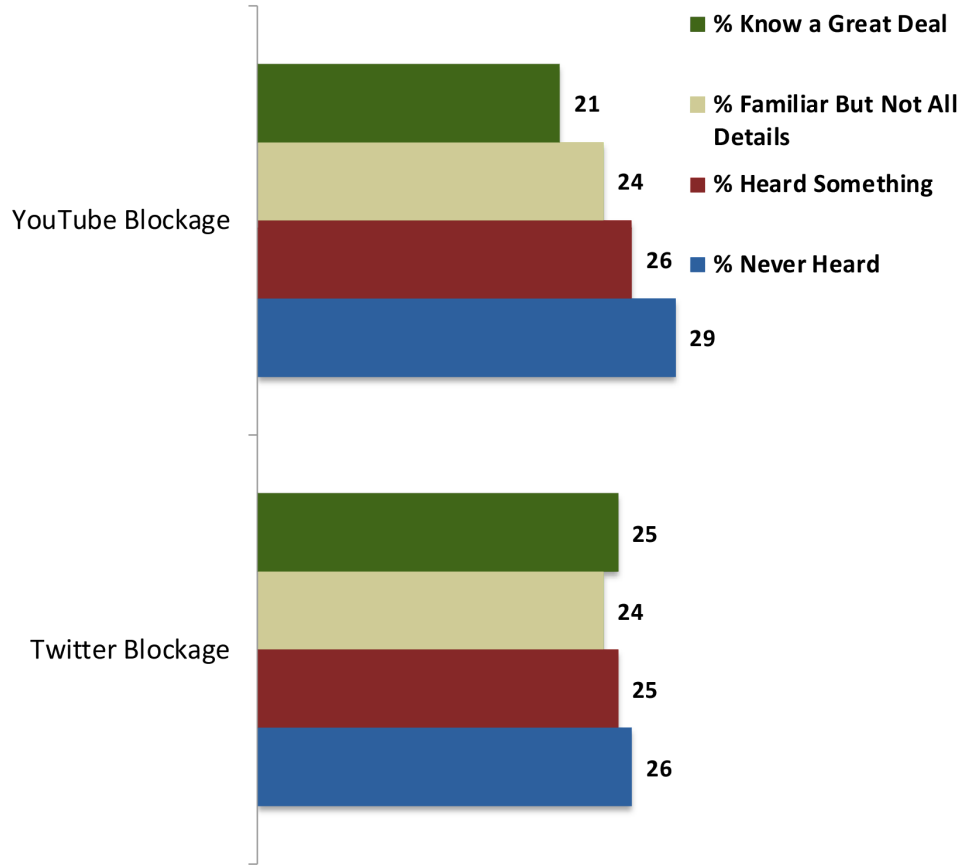
What about users of these two social media platforms? Twitter (40% of Turkish Internet users) and YouTube (57% of Turkish Internet users) users had a much greater awareness of the blockages. Over half (54%) of Twitter users reported knowing a great deal and another 28% reported being familiar about the Twitter blockage in Turkey. A smaller percentage of YouTube users (44%) reported knowing a great deal about the YouTube ban in Turkey and 28% of YouTube users reported being familiar with the ban but not knowing all the details.

Our second set of questions asked respondents whether they personally approve or disapprove of the government blocking each platform or if it was hard to tell. The results for all respondents are displayed in Figure 18.

About half of all people residing in Turkey strongly disapprove/disapprove of both the Twitter (47%) and YouTube (45%) blockages by the Turkish government. At the same time a small percentage of Turkish citizens (16%) each support the banning of these two platforms. The remaining roughly third of Turkish citizens in each case either neither approved nor disapproved of the bans or replied it was too difficult to tell.

The blockage of Twitter and YouTube were deeply unpopular among heavy Internet users with nearly 70% of heavy users in each case (69% and 68%, respectively) strongly disapproving/disapproving of the bans. Likewise 73% of Twitter users opposed the Twitter blockage and 63% of YouTube users strongly disapproved/disapproved of the government blocking YouTube. The plurality of non-Internet users in each case had no opinion (45% for each platform) though sizable percentages (29% for Twitter and 28% for YouTube) did strongly disapprove/disapprove of the blockages.

**FIGURE 17: FAMILIARITY WITH MARCH 2014 TWITTER AND YOUTUBE BLOCKAGES** (percentage of total respondents, single reponse)



As the blockage of Twitter and YouTube by the AKP dominated government was deeply politicized we also cross-tabulated the percentages of people living in Turkey who either approved or disapproved of the blockages by political party support. The results are provided in Table 9.

The blockage of these two social media platforms was deeply polarizing, not only between supporters of the ruling AKP party and the opposition parties but also among AKP supporters themselves. A plurality of AKP supporters (29% in each case) favored the government blocking Twitter and YouTube but at the same time nearly a quarter of AKP supporters (24% for Twitter and 23% for YouTube) also opposed the bans in each case.

Disapproval of the blockages was very high among supporters of the opposition parties and those with no party affiliation while at same time approval was ex-

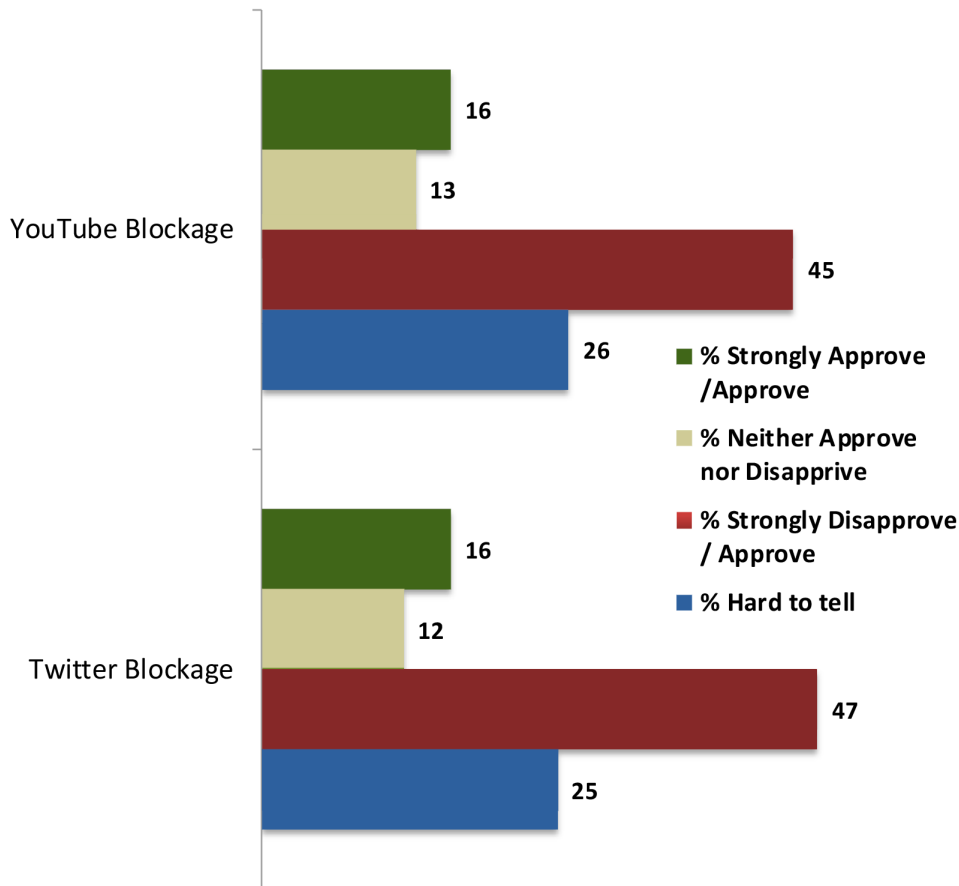
tremely low. Nearly three-fourth of CHP supporters (72% in each case) disapproved of the blockages as well as majorities of MHP (52% for Twitter and 50% for YouTube) and HDP (61% for Twitter and 57% for YouTube) supporters and those with no party affiliation (56% for Twitter and 53% for YouTube).

Beyond disapproval of the blockages, we also asked Internet users if they circumvented the government ban of either, or both, YouTube or Twitter while they were blocked. Figure 19 provides the percentage of Turkish Internet users who did or did not circumvent the blockages and their reported frequency of circumvention.

The vast majority (84%) of Turkish Internet users did not circumvent the blockages of either YouTube or Twitter. However, a small minority of Internet users (17% total) did circumvent the blockages to access either YouTube or Twitter with 8% reporting they did so



**FIGURE 18: APPROVAL AND DISAPPROVAL WITH MARCH 2014 TWITTER AND YOUTUBE BLOCKAGES (percentage of total respondents, single reponse)**



**TABLE 9: APPROVAL AND DISAPPROVAL WITH MARCH 2014 TWITTER AND YOUTUBE BLOCKAGES BY POLITICAL PARTY SUPPORT (percentage of all respondents, single reponse)**

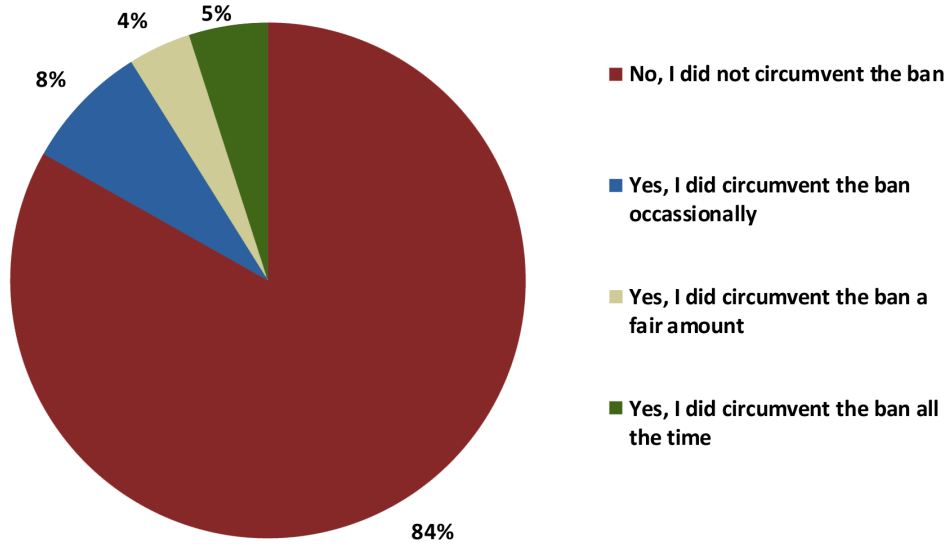
Blocked Platform	Party Support									
	% of AKP Agree/ Disagree		% of CHP Agree/ Disagree		% of MHP Agree/ Disagree		% of HDP Agree/ Disagree		% of No Party Agree/ Disagree	
Twitter	29	24	7	72	7	52	3	61	11	56
YouTube	29	23	7	72	5	50	4	57	10	53

occasionally, 4% reporting they did so a fair amount, and 5% reporting they did all the time.

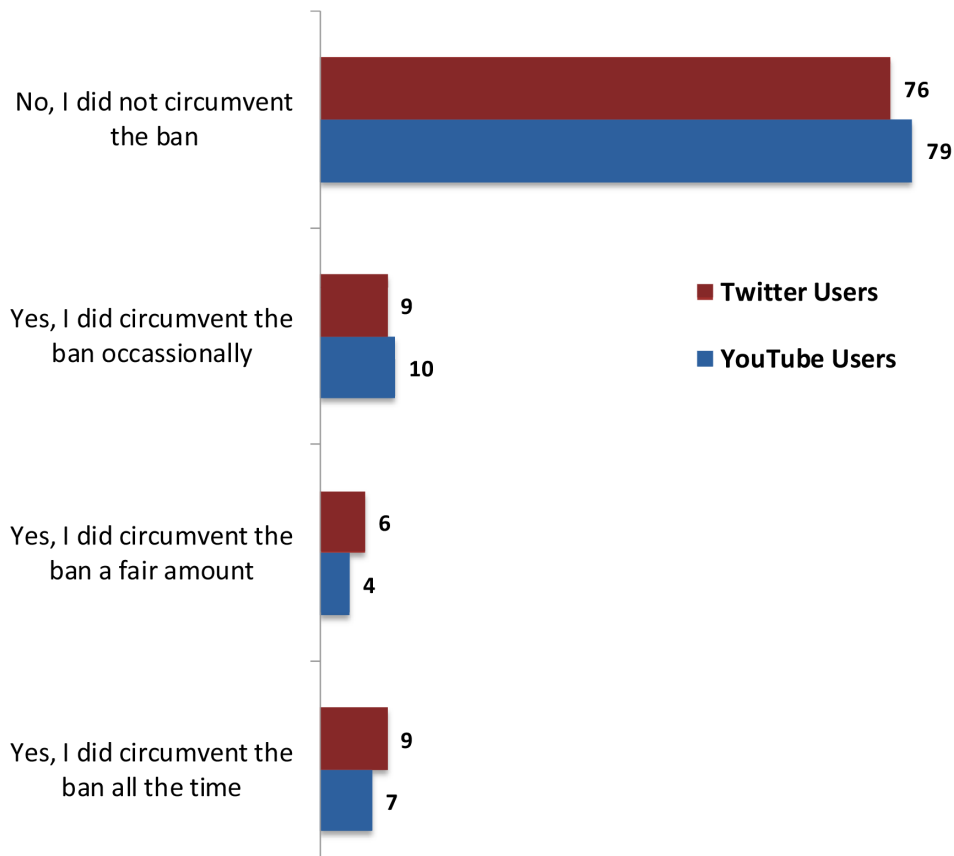
We also examined the frequency of circumvention behavior among Twitter and YouTube users specifically with the results depicted in Figure 20. Though about three-fourths of Twitter (76%) and YouTube (79%) users did not circumvent the blockages, the frequency

of circumvention behavior was higher as compared to Internet users in general. All in all about a quarter of Twitter users (24%) circumvented the blockages with 9% doing so occasionally, 6% a fair amount, and 9% doing so all the time. YouTube users circumvented the Internet to a lesser degree (21% total) with 10% doing so occasionally, 4% a fair amount, and 7% doing so all the time.

**FIGURE 19: APPROVAL AND DISAPPROVAL WITH MARCH 2014 TWITTER AND YOUTUBE BLOCKAGES (percentage of Internet users only, single reponse)**



**FIGURE 20: PERCENTAGE OF TWITTER AND YOUTUBE USERS THAT CIRCUMVENTED YOUTUBE & TWITTER BANS (percentage of Twitter and YouTube users only, single reponse)**



## Study Methodology

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The survey population were adults living in the Republic of Turkey (men and women, 18 years or older). The data for this analysis was collected through a national, face-to-face, general population household survey of Turkey conducted over a six-week period between December 20, 2014 and February 2, 2015. The sample was a random stratified, clustered sample with stratification applied in two levels based on the total population of Turkish census region and the urban/rural population within each region, with clusters containing 20 households. The Turkish government's census agency randomly selected clusters and households for the survey. Survey interviewers contacted 2111 households with one survey respondent randomly selected within each household without replacement. The response rate was 55% for a total of 1161 completed survey interviews. The margin of error (MOE) does not exceed +/-2.9% at a 95% confidence level for reported results for the entire population, +/- 3.7% at a 95% confidence level for reported results for Internet users, and +/- 3.7% at a 95% confidence level for reported results of non-users of the Internet.