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Elections in Turkey

November 1 Grand National Assembly Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Middle East and North Africa

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

1850 K Street, NW | Fifth Floor | Washington, DC 20006 | www.IFES.org

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Frequently Asked Questions

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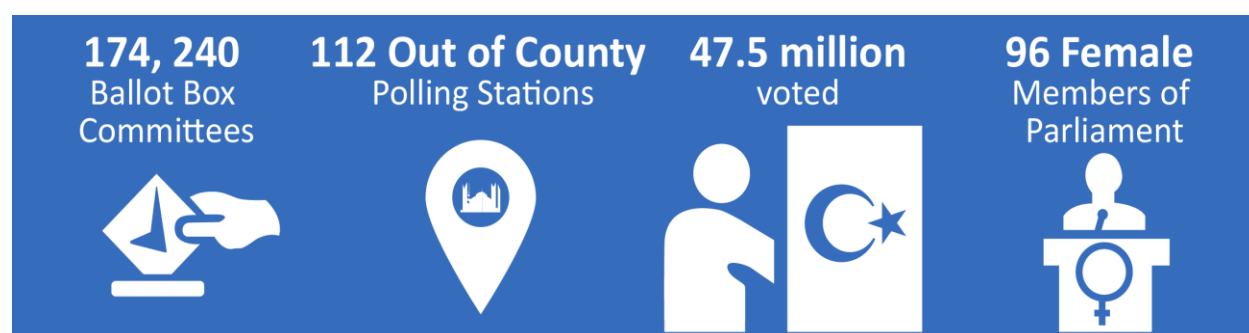
What are the elections for that will be held on November 1 in Turkey?

The Republic of Turkey will hold early, or snap, parliamentary elections that will elect all 550 members of the Grand National Assembly (TBMM) using a closed-list proportional representation (PR) system. The elections follow TBMM elections that occurred on June 7, 2015 and were called by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan after Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu failed to form a coalition government.

Who has the mandate to implement the November 1 elections?

The election management body in Turkey, known as the Supreme Board of Elections, or *Yüksek Seçim Kurulu* (YSK), will implement the November snap elections. The YSK is a permanent commission composed of 11 members from the judiciary that are elected for a six-year term. Six of the members are elected by the General Board of High Court of Appeals and five of the members are elected by the General Board of Council of State. In addition to this central board, the YSK is made up of 81 Provincial Election Boards, 1,067 District Electoral Boards, and 175,006 Ballot Box Committees.

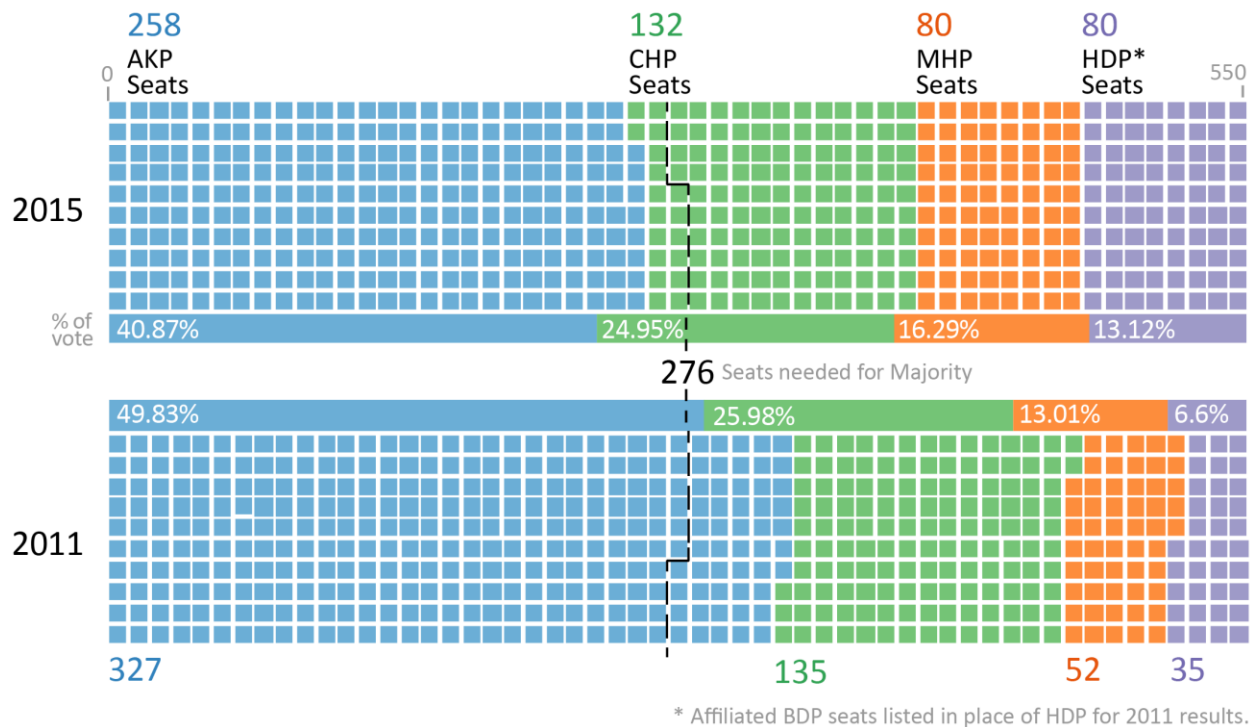
What were the results of the June 7 general elections?



Turkey held its parliamentary elections on June 7, 2015 to elect 550 members to the TBMM using a closed-list proportional representation (PR) system with 85 electoral districts spanning 81 provinces.¹ The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has held a majority of seats in the TBMM since its ascendance in 2002, won fewer than the 276 seats required to form a government without a coalition. Between the 2011 and 2015 parliamentary elections, the AKP lost 9 percent of its national vote share – or 69 seats in the TBMM. The Republican People’s Party (CHP), the main opposition party, achieved the second largest share of votes with 24.95 percent (132 seats). The CHP shed 1.3 percent of the national vote between 2011 and 2015, resulting in a marginal loss of only three seats in the TBMM.

¹ For more on the June 7 elections, see IFES FAQs [Elections in Turkey: 2015 Grand National Assembly Elections](#).

Figure 1: Grand National Assembly Election Results



Unlike the AKP and CHP, the two smallest parties, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and the People's Democratic Party (HDP) both made substantial gains in June. The MHP gained 3.2 percent on its 2011 finish, adding 28 seats, while the HDP received an additional 6.5 percent, for a total of 13.12 percent of the national vote, which pushed it well above the 10 percent threshold for achieving representation in Parliament. This resulted in 80 seats each for MHP and HDP and marked the first time a Kurdish interest party gained formal representation in Parliament. The rest of the parties and independent candidates contesting the elections received only 5 percent of the total votes, which is insufficient to enter Parliament.

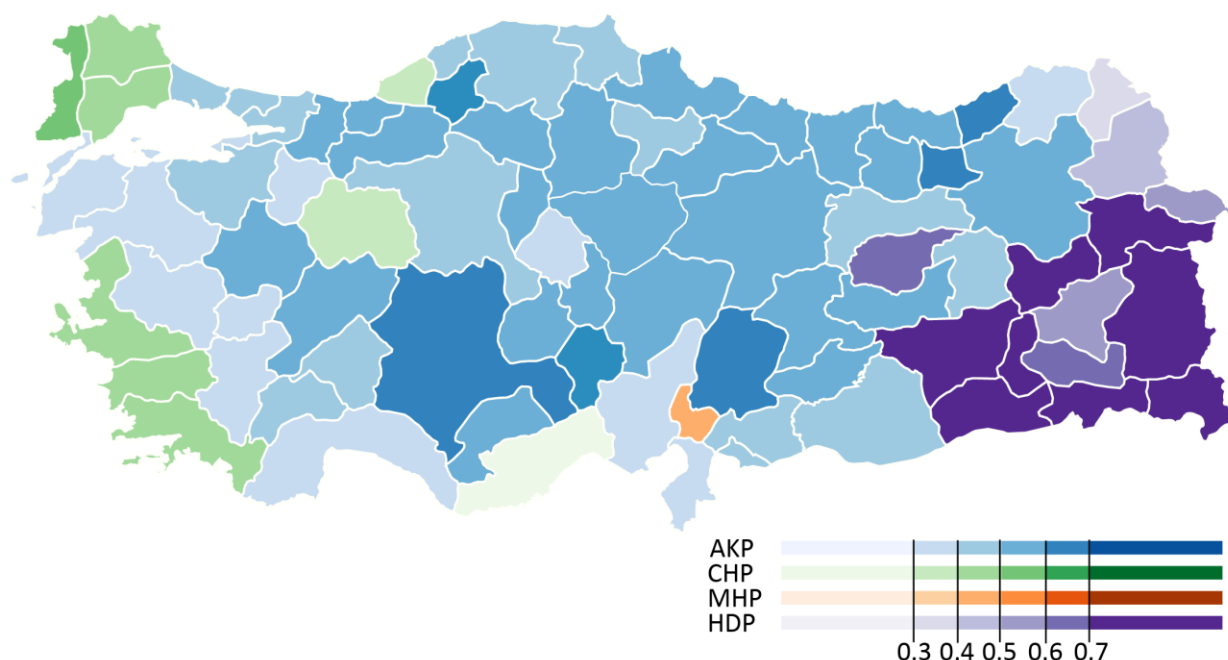
Where is geographical support for the various parties concentrated?

All four parties drew support from defined constituencies across the country. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) drew its largest base of support from Central Anatolia and the Black Sea region. While the AKP maintained broad national support (as shown in Figure 2 below), the AKP's margin of victory in each province was generally small. In many provinces across Anatolia, and in large population centers including Ankara and Istanbul, the AKP won a plurality of seats with less than 40 or 50 percent of the vote. The AKP won very few provinces with 60 percent or more of the vote. Overall, the AKP gained a smaller proportion of the vote in all 81 provinces in 2015.

The Republican People's Party (CHP) consolidated its major victories along the western coastline, while the People's Democratic Party (HDP) made considerable advances in Southeastern Anatolia (in many instances receiving more than 70 or 80 percent of the vote in heavily Kurdish provinces). The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) drew additional votes in rural provinces in Central Anatolia and the along the southern border.

Figure 2: Margin of Victory

*Percent of Votes Won by Each Political Party by Province
in June 2015 Parliamentary Election*



How were electoral operations conducted on Election Day?

The June 7 parliamentary elections, which were seen as high stakes by voters, were characterized by a high voter turnout of 83.92 percent. International observers felt that the voting process was generally conducted in a professional and efficient manner, but noted the following issues:

- Some polling stations did not authorize international observers to observe polling procedures;
- Some polling stations lacked proper arrangements for persons with disabilities and elderly voters;
- There were some cases of police interference during voting;
- Media freedom was an area of “serious concern”;
- The electoral framework resulted in significant malapportionment;

- The publicly released electoral calendar did not include any dates regarding post-election timelines for resolving electoral disputes and petitions;
- There were inadequate campaign finance regulations; and
- There were undue procedural barriers to citizens becoming observers.

How were election disputes handled in the June 7 elections?

Article 111 of the Law on Basic Provisions on Elections and Voter Registers, as well as Regulation 236 of the Supreme Board of Elections (YSK) addresses the process of complaints and appeals. The YSK is the only body responsible for examining all election-related disputes and its decisions cannot be appealed. Election disputes can be referred to local branches of the election commission, such as the Provincial Election Boards (PEB), the District Election Boards (DEB), or the Ballot Box Committees (BBC), while other complaints are lodged directly with the YSK. These disputes are adjudicated by the highest level of the election board overseeing the jurisdiction in which an objection is raised. In other words, if a dispute originates at the BBC, it will be adjudicated by the DEB; a dispute against procedures or results of a DEB will be adjudicated by the PBE, and disputes originating at the PBE will be adjudicated by the YSK. Disputes that are adjudicated by the YSK are considered final and cannot be appealed to a different judicial authority. Information on complaints and appeals is not publically available after they have been decided and is posted on an ad hoc and case-by-case basis by the YSK.

During the June elections, political parties had until June 17 to submit official complaints. The majority of the complaints received by the YSK were related to the media coverage of elections. Complaints related to campaigning were received by the lower level election commissions (PEBs, DEBs, and BBCs). Some lower level electoral administration decisions were overturned by higher level ones. For instance, a DEB decision that the President of the Republic could not use public space during the campaign period because the space was reserved for a party competing in the election, in this instance the Patriotic Party, was ultimately overturned by a PEB. On the second appeal, the YSK ruled that the venue would be split between the President and the Patriotic Party, invoking YSK Regulation 236 on sharing a venue when more than one party or candidate apply to use it, despite the fact that the President in this instance was not an election candidate.

Although the YSK is comprised of judges that are elected by the Supreme Court and the Council of State, the Constitution does not provide for judicial review of YSK rulings, including those related to electoral disputes. While the Constitutional Court can receive individual petitions related to any breach of fundamental freedoms, the court has not expressed an opinion on whether electoral rights listed under the European Council on Human Rights, of which Turkey is a signatory, apply to fundamental rights.

How is the government formed?

Following elections, the President appoints the Prime Minister from the party with the largest representation in the Grand National Assembly (TBMM), who in turn appoints a caretaker cabinet. The President must then present the Prime Minister with the mandate to form the Council of Ministers. Upon

receiving the mandate, the Prime Minister has 45 days to appoint the Council of Ministers or snap elections will automatically occur. If the Prime Minister is able to appoint the Council of Ministers within this time frame, the list of names must be submitted to the TBMM and receive a vote of confidence. If the Prime Minister is unable to form a government, as was the case in Turkey following the June 7 elections, he/she must return the mandate to the President, who can either ask the party with the second largest vote share to form the government or call early snap elections.

The specific timeline of the government formation process following the June 7 elections occurred as follows:

- **July 9:** Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu tendered his government's resignation, at which time President Erdoğan presented Prime Minister Davutoğlu with the mandate to form a government within 45 days
- **July 10 - August 17:** Prime Minister Davutoğlu met with other parties for coalition-building talks
- **August 18:** Unable to form a government, Prime Minister Davutoğlu returned the mandate to President Erdoğan
- **August 21:** Rather than present the mandate to the second largest party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), President Erdoğan announced snap elections
- **August 23:** The constitutional time limit for government formation was reached, allowing the Supreme Board of Elections to determine that snap elections would occur on November 1

What are/were the procedures moving forward since the government formation process failed?

The snap elections were constitutionally required to be held within 90 days of their announcement. After the announcement of snap elections, Prime Minister Davutoğlu's caretaker cabinet was dissolved and President Erdoğan tasked the Prime Minister with appointing an interim power-sharing government within five days. The interim government has since been sworn in and will be dissolved once snap elections are held and a new government is formed.

Political parties were required to submit their nominations for the November 1 elections to the Supreme Board of Elections (YSK) by September 18 and the YSK announced the official list of parliamentary candidates ten days later. The voter registry was finalized on September 20 and each voter's polling station was announced on September 22.

What differences will there be between the June 7 elections and November 1 elections?

There are a number of differences between the June and November elections for the Grand National Assembly. These include:

- Out-of-country-voting (OCV), which was conducted over the course of 23 days for the June elections, will be held from October 8 to October 25, providing only 17 days for voters during the snap elections.
- Sixteen political parties, with a total of 8,426 candidates, will contest the November 1 elections, as opposed to the 20 parties and 9,271 candidates that contested the June 7 elections.
- Each party's position on the ballot is decided by random drawing ahead of each election. Therefore, the parties' positions will differ from the June 7 election ballot.

How many voters are eligible to vote in the November 1 elections?

There are a total of 54 million voters who are registered to vote in Turkey in the snap elections and 2.9 million registered to vote abroad. The number of registered voters has increased since the June 7 elections, with an additional 310,620 voters registered to vote inside Turkey and an additional 28,227 registered to vote outside the country.

What could be some potential outcomes of the November 1 elections?

It is unclear if the snap election will return substantially different results. However, the political environment has shifted dramatically in the four months since the June election. Based on expert opinions and public opinion polls, there are three possible outcomes in the snap election:

1. The People's Democratic Party (HDP) fails to meet the 10 percent threshold, and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) gains a significant majority.
2. The snap election returns a result similar to that of the June elections, with the HDP easily passing the threshold and the AKP remaining unable to recapture a majority.
3. The HDP is able to meet the 10 percent threshold, but the AKP siphons enough votes from a variety of parties to capture a slim parliamentary majority.

If the AKP is unable to form a government yet again, the mandate will be passed on to the second largest party. In the event that government formation fails a second time, President Erdoğan would call for new early parliamentary elections.

Resources

- [Constitution of the Republic of Turkey](#)
- [Elections in Turkey: 2015 Grand National Assembly Elections \(IFES FAQs\)](#)
- [Law on Basic Provisions on Elections and Voter Registers](#)
- [Law on Political Parties](#)
- [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights: Early Parliamentary Elections 1 November 2015 Interim Report](#)
- [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights: Parliamentary Elections 7 June 2015 Final Report](#)
- [Parliamentary Elections Law](#)
- [Supreme Board of Elections](#)
- [Supreme Board of Elections: List of Out-of-Country Voting](#)