

The Turkish Community in Bucharest

A Sociological Overview

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Table of contents

Overview	5
Methodology	10
Life in Turkey	13
Migration behaviour	24
Economic life in Romania	42
Family and social life in Romania	52
Relations and attitudes regarding Turkey	68

Overview

Most of the current Romanian research on migration issues looks into the patterns of Romanian emigration to Western Europe. The main reason is that there are far more Romanians leaving than foreigners entering the country. In other word, Romania is a country with a net emigration rate. This does not mean that immigration does not take place in Romania. This study is one of the few on this issue.

Why choose the Turkish migrants as a research topic? There were several reasons for this choice. First of all, Romania and Turkey have a relationship with a history going back more than half a millennium. Secondly, and perhaps as a consequence of this, Turkey was the main foreign destination for Romanians in the early 1990s. After the collapse of the communist regime, foreign travel became easier. However, the visa regime for Western Europe was far for strict than the one for Turkey, perhaps

the most accessible at that time. The relatively close distance (less than a day by coach from Bucharest to Istanbul) further made Turkey more attractive as a destination. The ease of travel was both ways. Following a turbulent decade, Turkey was also opening up to the world. Romania became both a travel destination and business opportunity for some Turks. A third reason is that, looking back after some 20 years, the image Turkish expatriate community in Romania is successful one, both in terms of economic wellbeing and social integration in Romanian society. Turks work, run their business and take part in the wider social life with Romanian citizens. They do not form a community closed to the wider society.

Our research revealed that Turkish migration in Romania had two main waves. The first was in the early 1990s, in the immediate aftermath of the new visa regime, which was meant to ease travel. The second was in the early 2000s, when Romania was on track to become an EU Member State on January 1, 2007.

The main reason for the decision to leave Turkey was an economic one. For instance the economic crisis in

the 2001-2002 was a factor of the second migration wave. The economic factor was reported in various ways, such as lack of economic opportunities at home, regional problems, or business failure.

What is the profile of the Turkish immigrants in Romania? Their social background (region of birth, education, family type, culture) reveals the diversity of Turkish society a generation or more ago. Most of them were born in the less developed regions of Turkey, such as the Eastern Anatolia or the South East. Their family was a traditional one, with many siblings, in which the father, usually a religious person, was the key figure.

Romania provided the first experience of leaving in a foreign country for the vast majority. I, coming over, most enjoyed the support of friend or relatives. Economically, almost all could not be regarded as well-off. However, those that succeeded in Romania remained. Half are business owners, with the others being employees, usually in other small and medium sized enterprises owned by other Turks. Following economic success, most of them brought their wives and children from Turkey. A

significant minority married with Romanian women, usually employees or co-workers.

Staying in Romania for the foreseeable future is part of their life plan. Some learned Romanian, others at least have a basic understanding of the language. The strong link with Romania is seen not only in buying property, but also in having an sensitive understanding of Romania's main social problems.

The ties with Turkey are maintained with regular, but not often, travel and by sending back money to relatives. In most cases, the sums involved are moderate. The vast majority do not expect to return to Turkey in the near or medium future.

The story of the Turks that saw Romania as a chance for fulfilling their hopes and life plans is open ended. Alongside the Romanians with whom they live together, they share the opportunities and challenges, the hopes and distress of an ever changing world.

In the future, not just Romanians will emigrate in pursuit of their desire for a better life. The fluxes of

immigration will amplify and Romanians will come into contact with people from other cultures, with similarities and, at the same time, differences in the way they think, feel and behave in the search for a better life. A better knowledge and understanding of the world they live in would be achieved through living together and establishing social relations. Between these multiple mirrors, we will better understand ourselves and increase the chances of personal and collective development.

This research revealed not only the rich, complex and multicoloured human universe of the Turkish community in Bucharest. It also provided another way of looking at the Romanian world and the direction in which it is changing.

Methodology

- Project overview: This report presents the main results of a survey made in the Turkish expatriate community in Bucharest, the capital of Romania. Estimates on the size of the Turkish community in Romania vary around 10,000 individuals, the vast majority of which reside in Bucharest. For research purposes, only the male heads of households were interviewed. In addition, there is in Romania a small minority of ethnic Turks and Tatars with Romanian citizenship in the south east of the country on the Black Sea shore, which was not the object of this study. This research covered only Turkish immigrants that came to Romania after the Romanian Revolution (1989)
- Population: households of Turkish expatriates living in Bucharest, the capital of Romania

- Sample design: a list of more than 2,000 Turkish citizens, male heads of households living in Bucharest was compiled from several sources: Turkish community organizations, community leaders, well-informed persons. A simple random sample was drawn from this list. The sample is representative for the households that make up the Turkish community in Bucharest at a 95% confidence level with a +/- 3.8% margin of error
- The field workers were instructed to interview at least one more person recommended by each interviewee, which was not in the sample list.
The interviews were conducted face to face, in English, at home or at work, with prior contact to establish a suitable moment
The values are presented as returned from the field (the data was not weighted).
- Sample size: 658 adult males
- Field research: 20 May – 20 June 2011

Life in Turkey

The social background of the Turkish expatriates living in Bucharest offers an insight into the Turkish society around a generation ago.

Most of them were born in the populated but less affluent parts of the country at that time. The mountainous Eastern Anatolia and South Eastern Anatolia account as regions of birth for almost half. A process of internal migration was underway in Turkey at that time, as some individuals were pursuing a life plan with better outcomes by moving towards the more developed and prosperous regions of Marmara (Istanbul) and the Aegean (Izmir). Therefore, the breakdown between the region of birth and the region of youth reveals a significant difference. Marmara and the Aegean count for less than 25% as region of birth and more than 43% as region of youth.

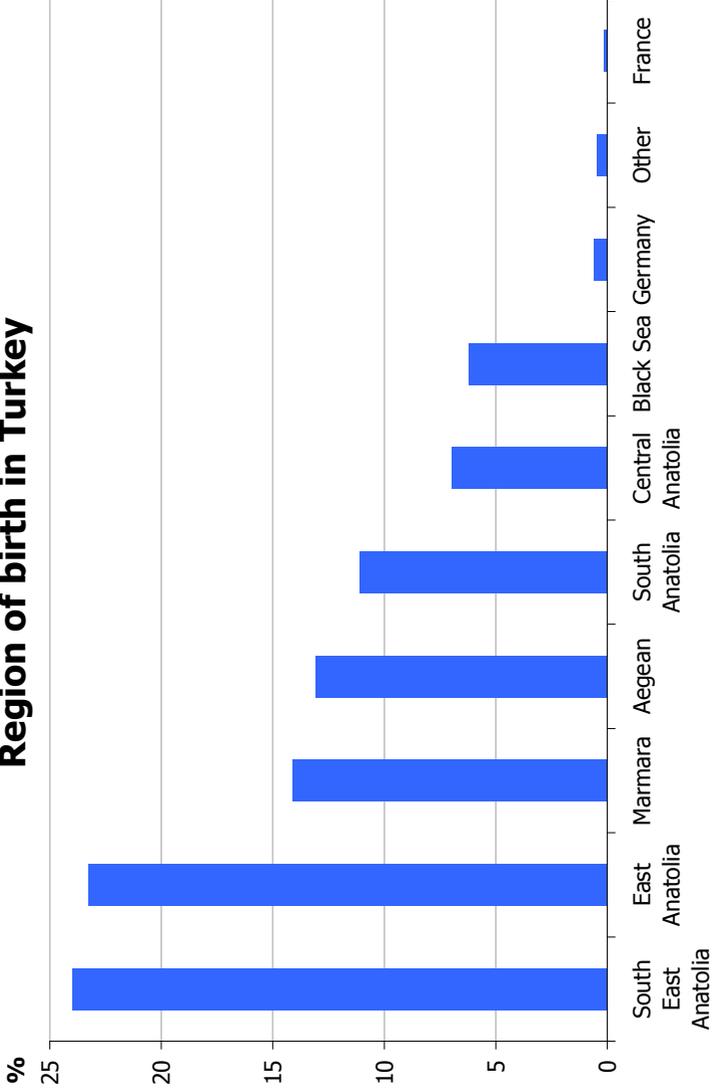
The families in which they were born were predominantly traditional. This not only points to cultural factors, but also to a less developed, more rural Turkey of several decades ago. Their average age is 40, with almost 90% being between 30 and 59. In their parent families, the number of children was quite high, with an average of more than 5 and a minimum of 2. The education level varied. A significant minority of over a quarter have university degree. Almost 29% have a high school diploma. However, more than 43%, the largest group, are elementary school graduates. Those with higher education lived in their youth in the more prosperous and urbanized Marmara and Aegean regions.

The father's occupation provides an insight into their own social mobility. In nearly 37% of cases, the father was the owner of a medium or small sized business. At the other end of the social strata were the farmers and unskilled workers, which account for just over 37%. Tradesman and skilled workers comprise the next significant category with 19%. Those in professions that require an university degree, such as doctors,

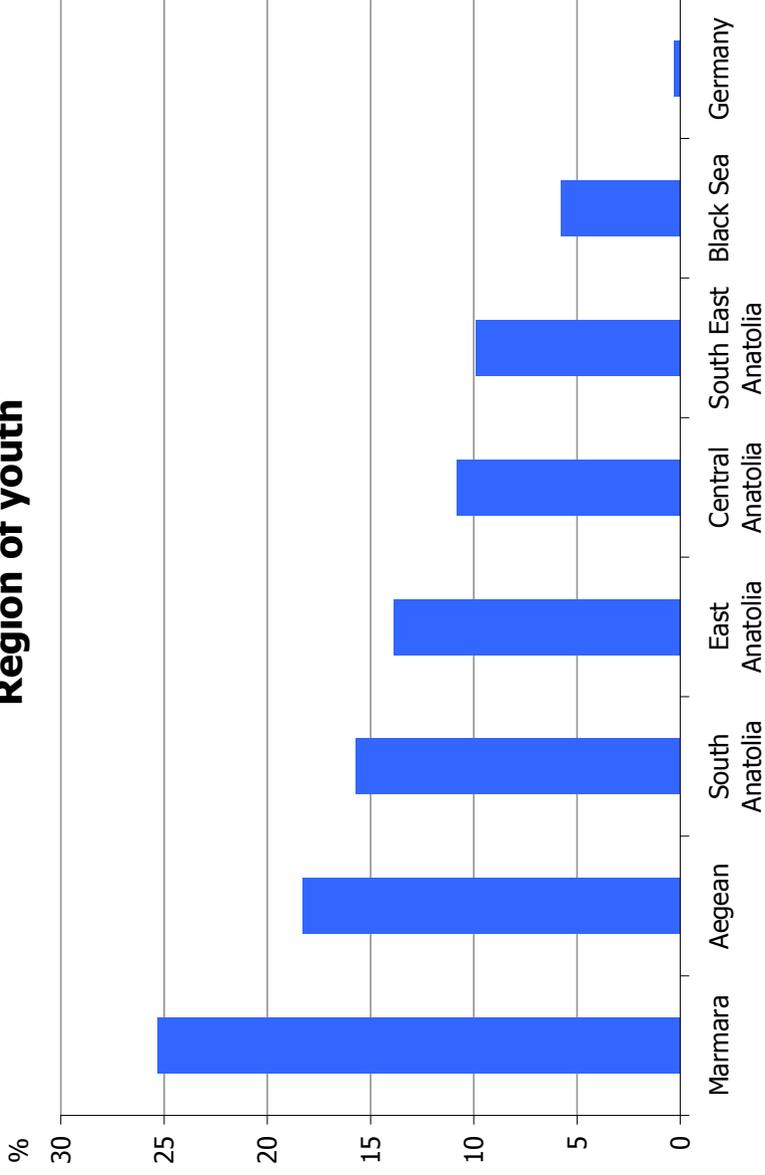
university professors, lawyers, accountants, state employees and military officers comprise the final category with almost 9%.

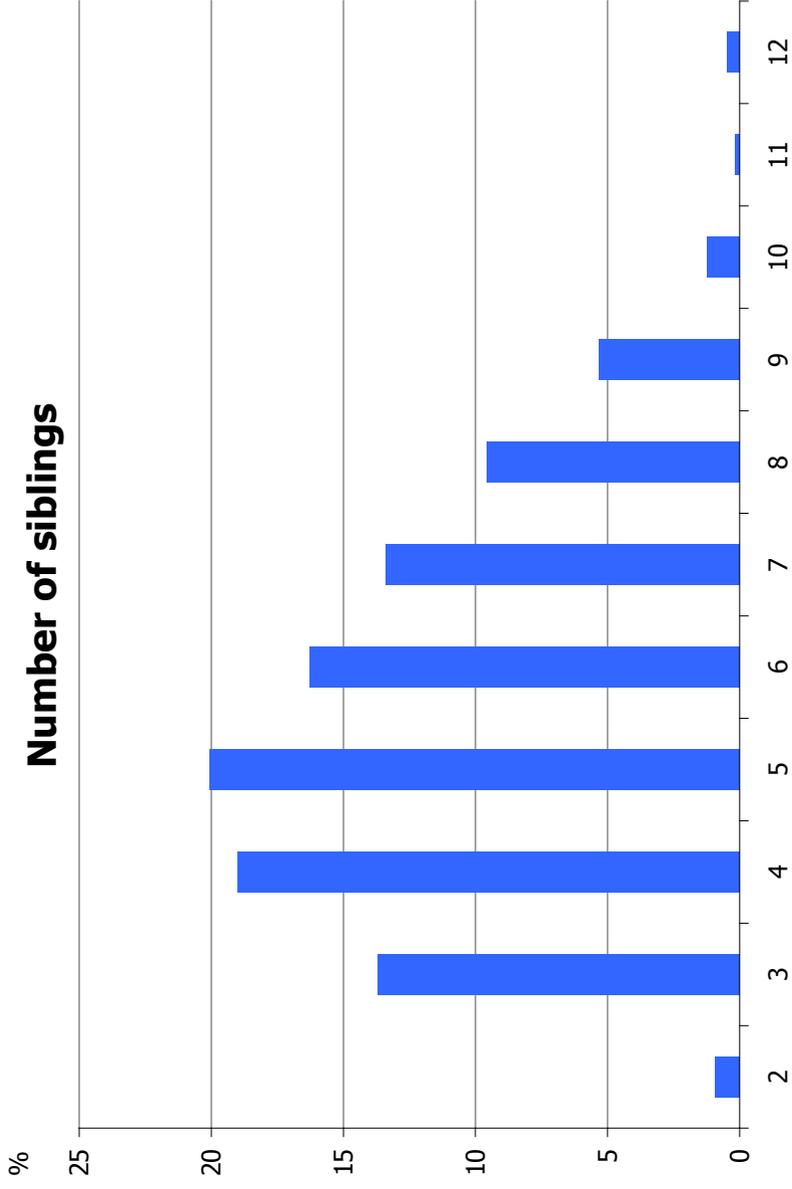
Looking at the family from a cultural point of view, more than 78% of those that took part in this survey regard their father as a religious, with an even split of 39% each for those very religious, practising prayer five times a day and those moderately religious, which attended each Friday prayer. Just over one fifth regard their father as a not a particularly religious person.

Region of birth in Turkey

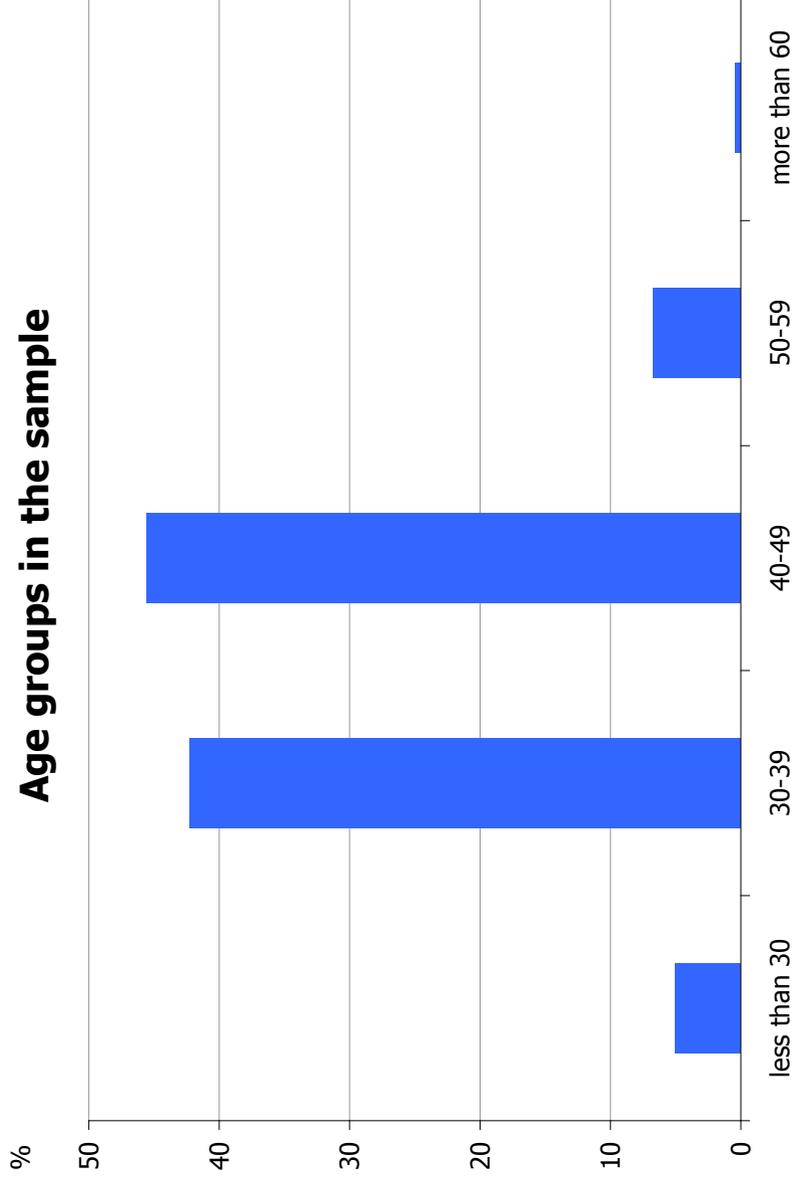


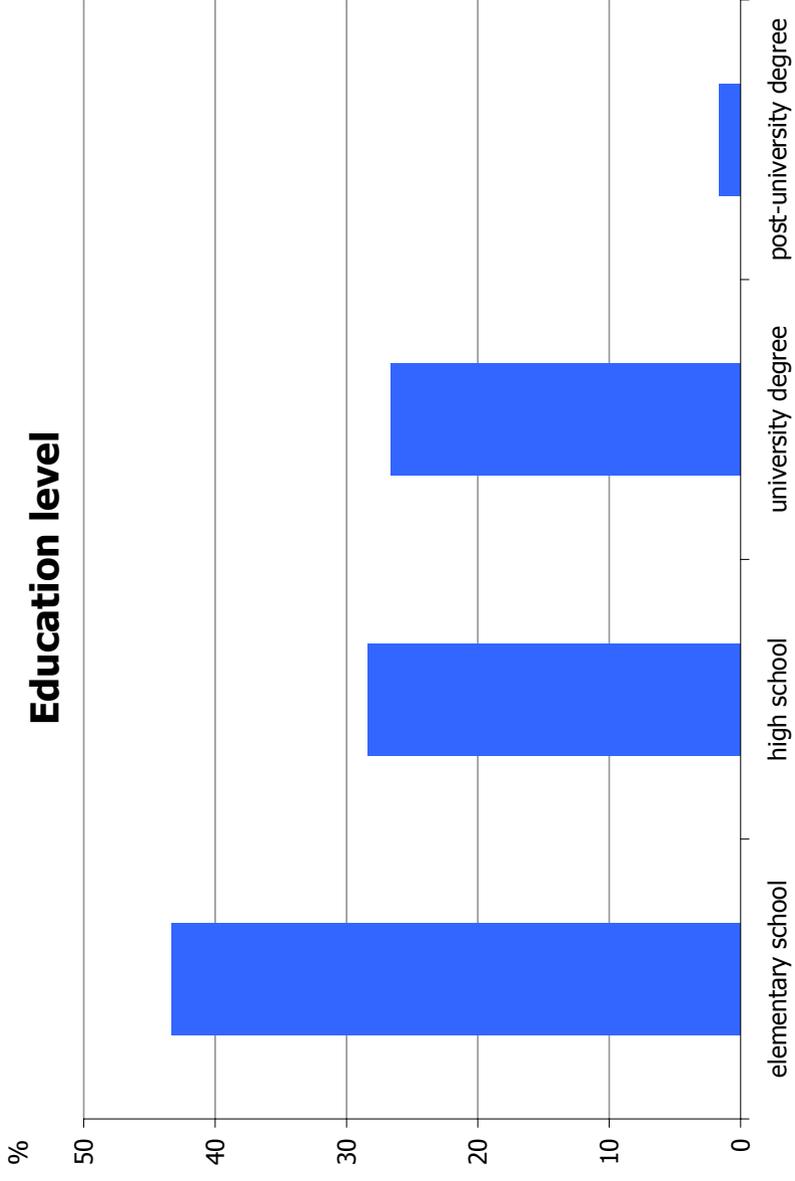
Region of youth



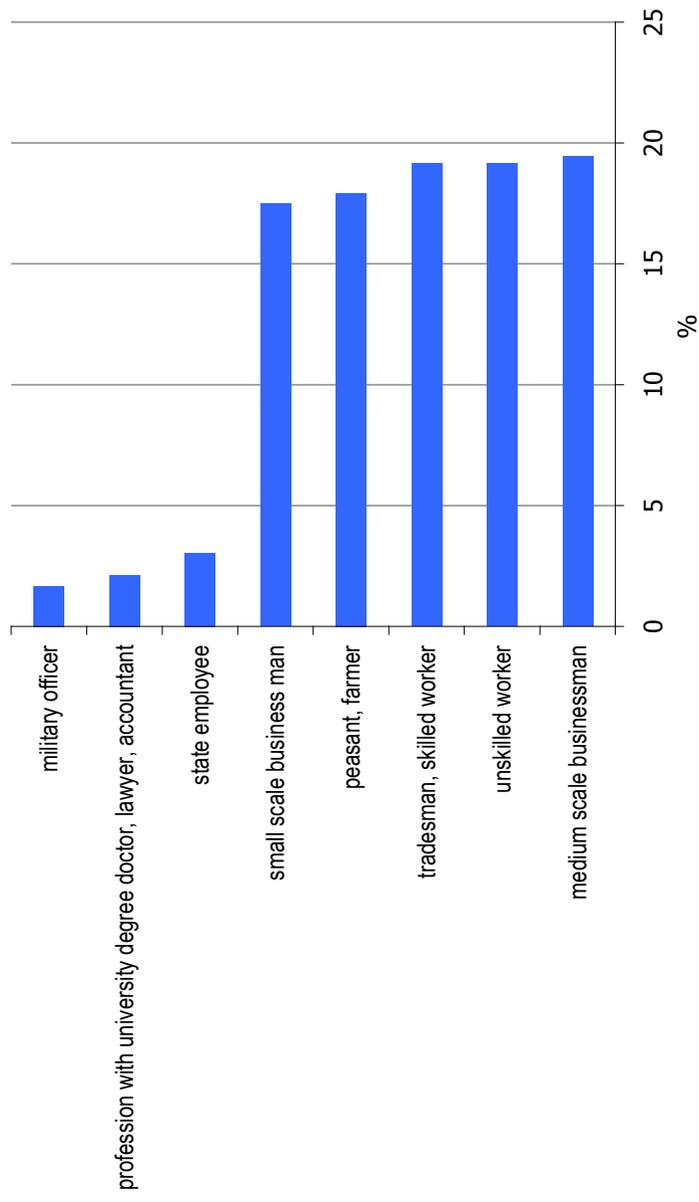


Age groups in the sample

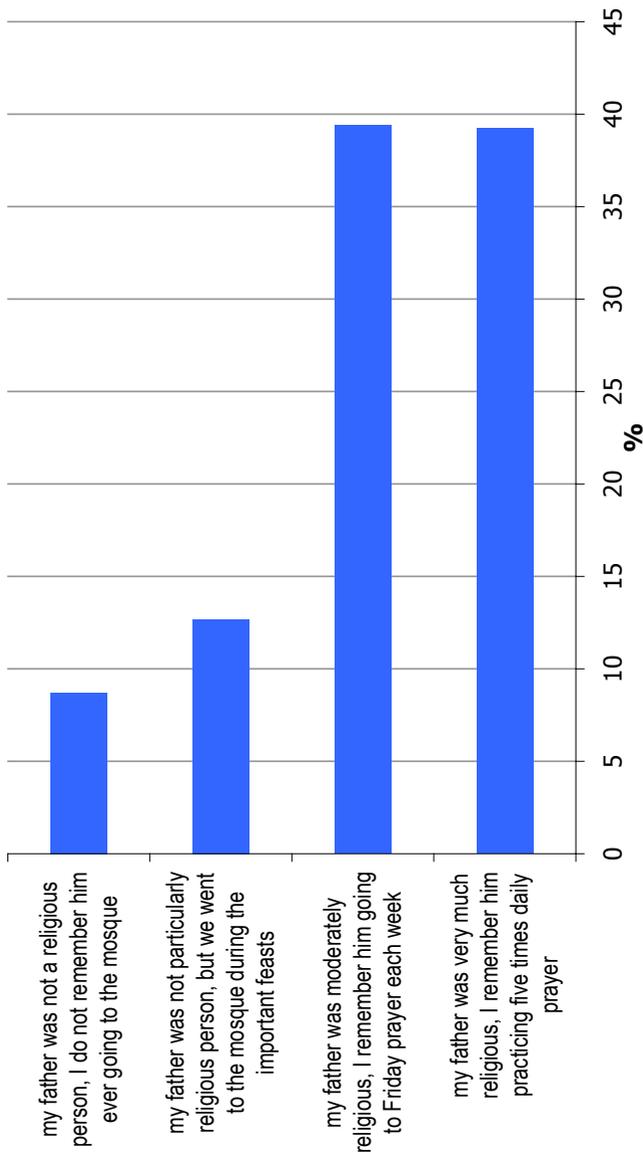




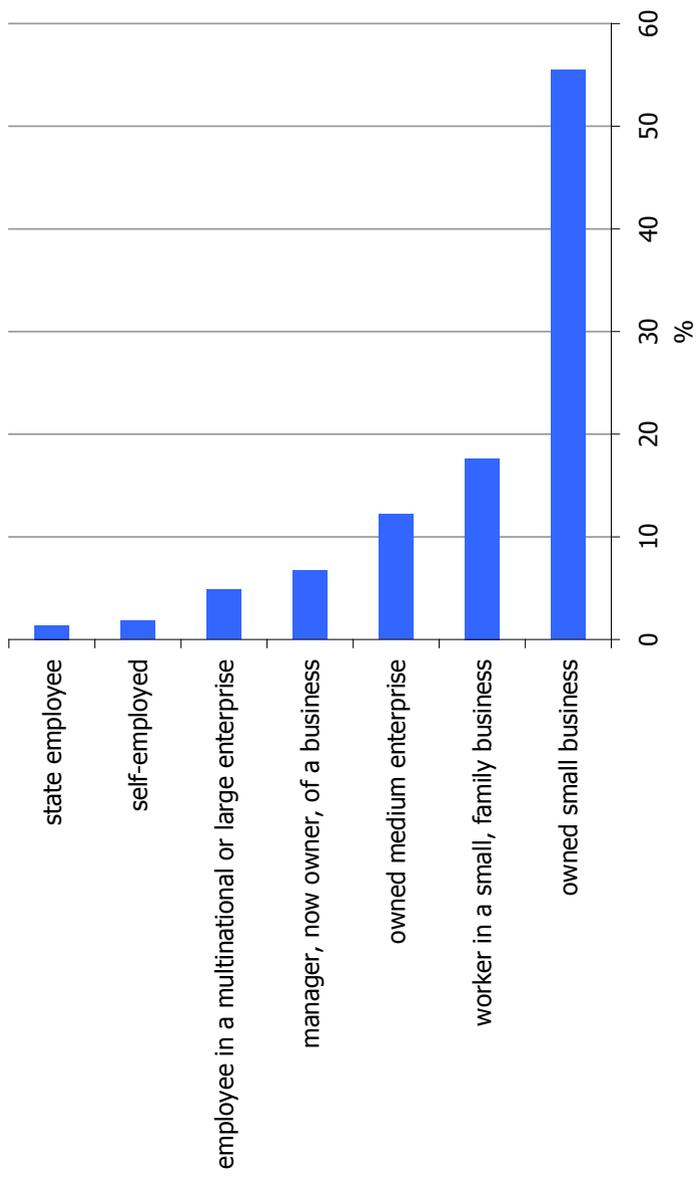
Father's occupation



Which of the following statements would best describe your father's religious behaviour?



Main occupation in Turkey



Migration behaviour

Turkish people have been migrating to various countries in Europe during the last five decades. The main reason was economic. Turkey economic and social development in the new millennium came after a long period plagued by recurrent economic and political crisis. One of the main reasons for leaving Turkey, most of the expats living in Bucharest point to economic oriented answers: regional or local problems leading to difficulty in having a successful business or professional career (25%), business failure in Turkey (18%), looking for economic opportunities elsewhere (15%) or economic crisis in Turkey at the moment of departure (14%). Other answers point rather to the social relations behind the departure, such as a job offer abroad (15%) or an invitation to provide assistance to a business owned by friends or relatives (12%).

The economic cause of Turkish emigration could also be seen in the age during their first trip to a foreign country. None of the respondents were below working age. The average and median age was 28, with most answers between 21 and 35.

Romania provided the first experience outside the home country for most (93%) of the present members of the Bucharest Turkish community. A small minority (7%) had a previous expat experience, in most case in former Soviet states.

Based on the year of arrival, there seem to be two main waves of Turkish immigration to Romania. The first was in 1994-95. In the early 1990s, Romania and Turkey were both looking to improve their economic and political relations with the outside world. In Romania, the communist regime had collapsed in 1989, while Turkey was still dealing with the aftermath of the 1980s military rule. As a result, the relationship between Romania and Turkey entered a new phase with increased trade and ease of travel restrictions. For two thirds of the respondents, the (friendly) visa regime prior to 2000 was a factor of

the decision to come to Romania. The second major wave was in 2001-2003. At that time, Turkey was facing an economic and political crisis, while the Romania was on track to joining the EU and had returned to economic growth following the 1997-2000 economic downturn. By the middle of the decade, as the Turkish economy was in a period of sustained growth and political stability, immigration to Romania severely declined.

Moving to another country is a decision that carries risks. Not having a sustainable business opportunity, not finding a job, finding a suitable housing, anti-immigration issues, the visa regime, the cost of life, are all uncertainties to be carefully weighted. One way of reducing these uncertainties is by using one's social relations. Considering migration as a social phenomenon, the connections with family members, friends, people met in the professional or business life are factors both in terms of the decision to leave one's country and as probability of succeeding in the destination country. The idea to come to Romania came, for almost three quarters of the Turkish expats in Bucharest, from a relative, friend, or business partner (38%)

or as directly as a job offer from an acquaintance that had already established a business in Romania (36%). Therefore, in one way of looking at Turkish immigration to Romania, success breeds success. How did others, especially those first migrants that had no relatives or business contacts, come to the idea of choosing Romania as a destination country? A third answer to this question was Romania being in the news, which made them think it could be an answer to their needs (24.5%).

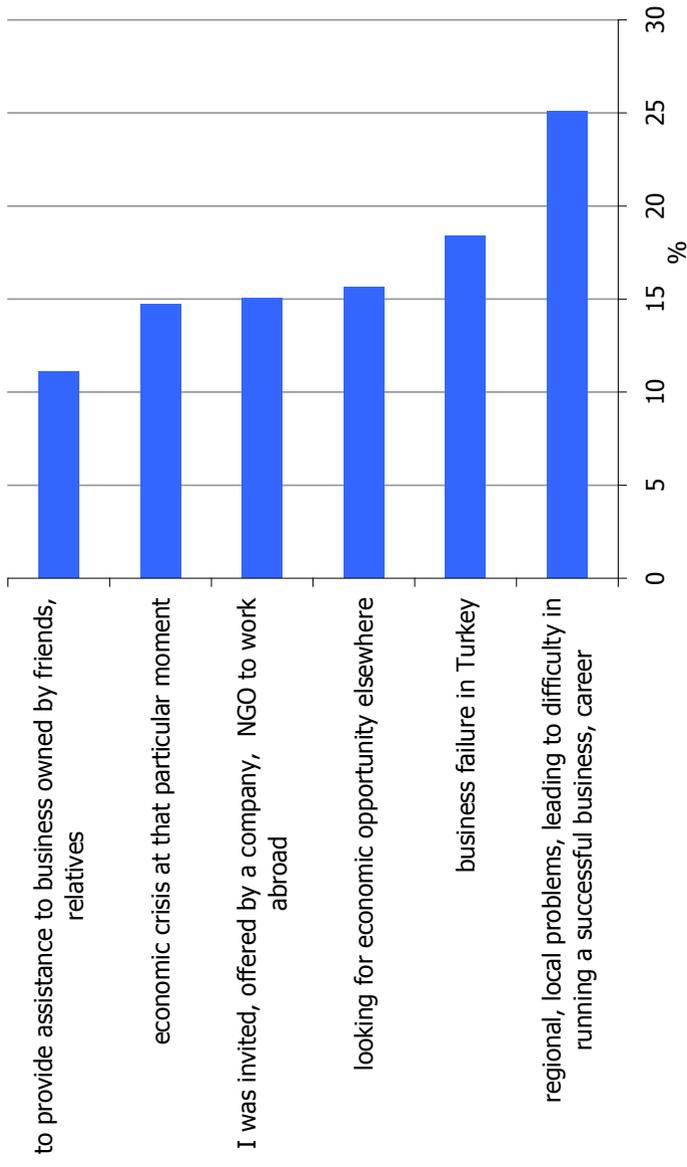
The importance of social relations in migration context is seen in the fact that almost two in three of those taking part in the survey (63%) had known somebody that came to Romania prior to leaving Turkey. As to who was this person, once the order of the answers fits the scale of social relations: relatives (34%), friends and acquaintances (32.5%), business partners (17%), and co-workers (10%). Relevant to the economic and social standing of the migrants is how they made their first trip to Romania. Most used the cheapest transport available, the bus (65%). The trip from Istanbul to Bucharest takes less than a full day by road under present conditions,

when border controls are more relaxed for personal travel. However, it is not a too comfortable experience. For the same distance, the hour-long flight was preferred by less than 30%. Last and least used were the personal car and the train.

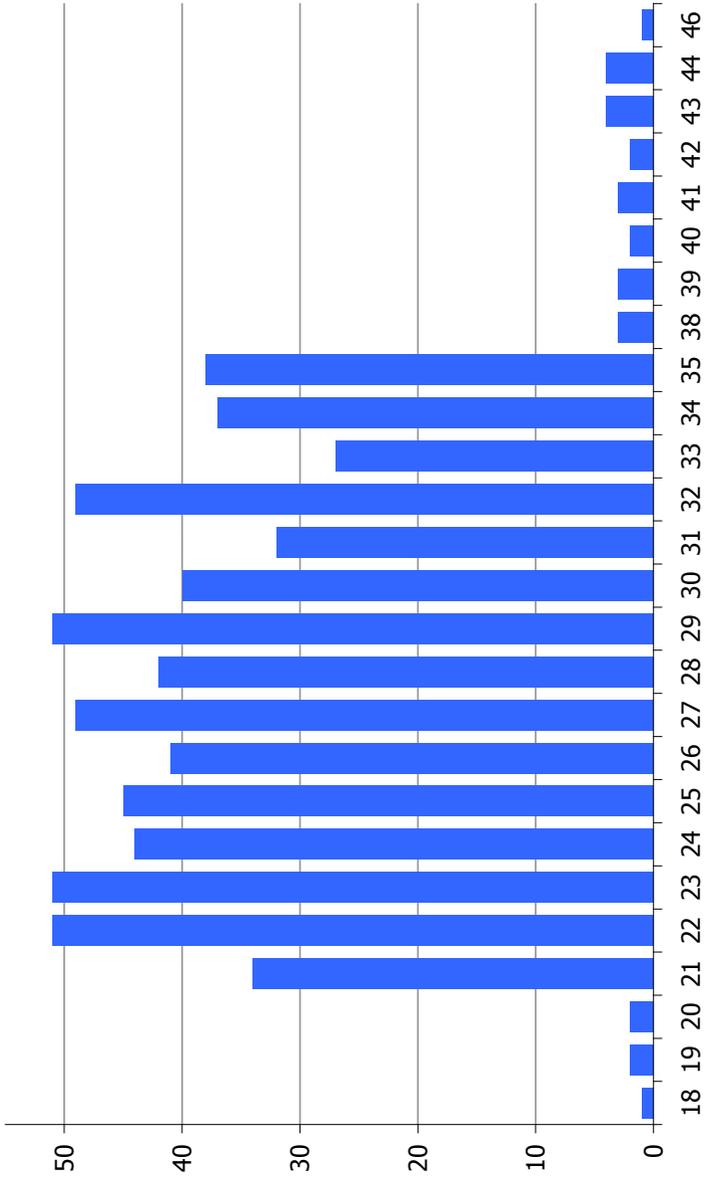
As we have seen, the migration social behaviour has two sides, not just being invited, but also inviting others to come over. Just over a half of the Turkish expats in Bucharest (52%) invited someone to come over from Turkey to Romania, other than close family members. The answers were evenly distributed between friends and acquaintances or extended family members that provide assistance in the business or just seek employment.

The decision to return to Turkey comes from the failure in achieving one's economic and social goals. Almost 70% know at least one person that left Romania for good, although the maximum number is three. The main reason was business failure (51%), second being the lack of compliance with residence regulations (38%). The only instance of voluntarily returning to Turkey was at retirement age (5.8%).

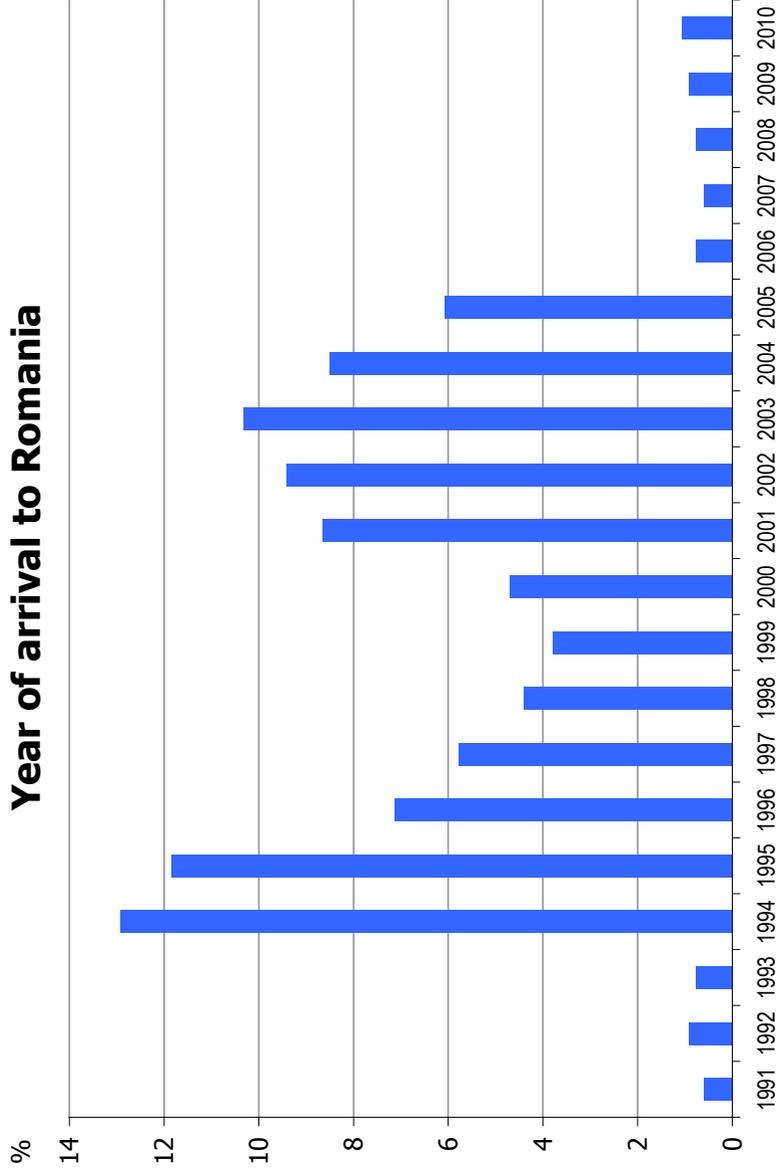
Main reason for leaving Turkey



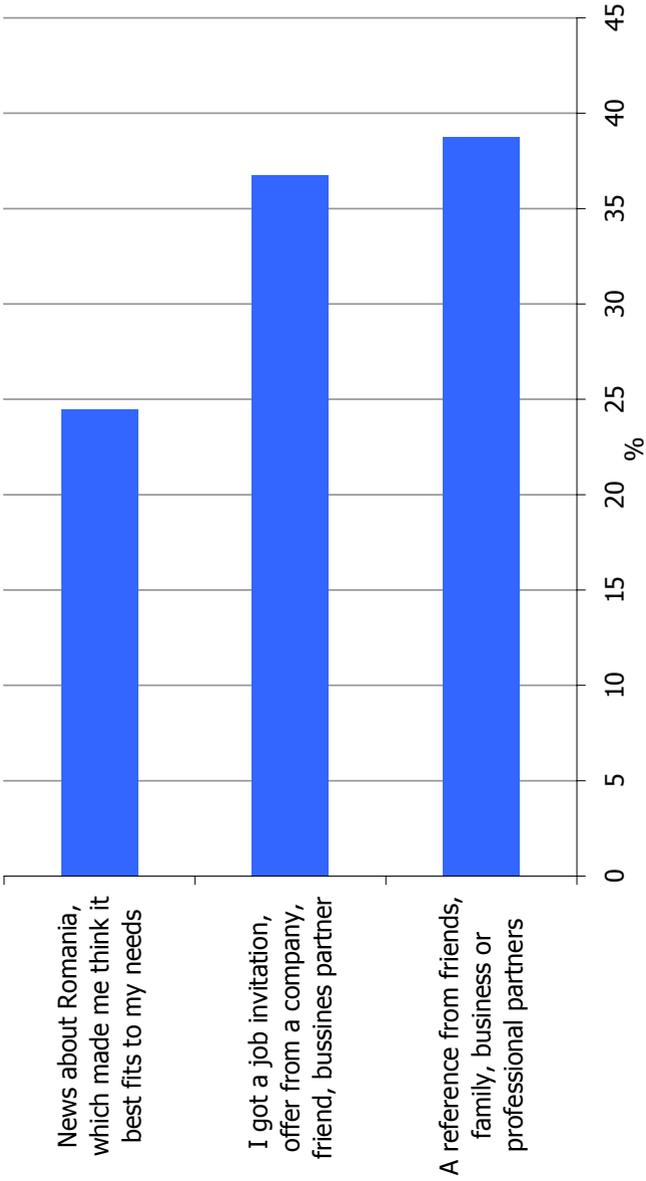
Age during the first trip to a foreign country



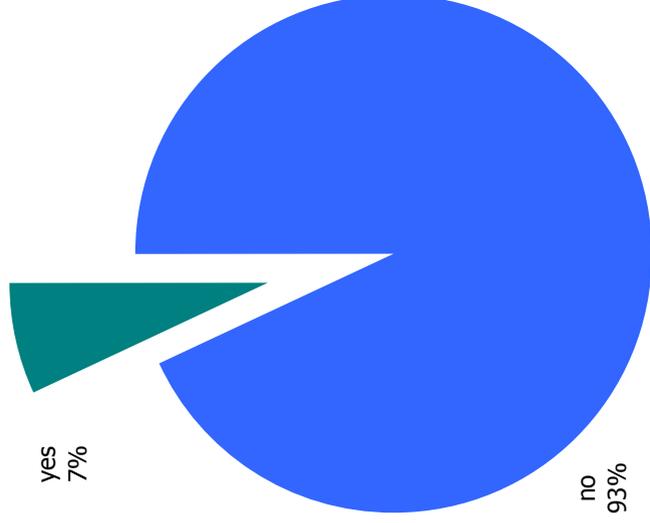
Year of arrival to Romania



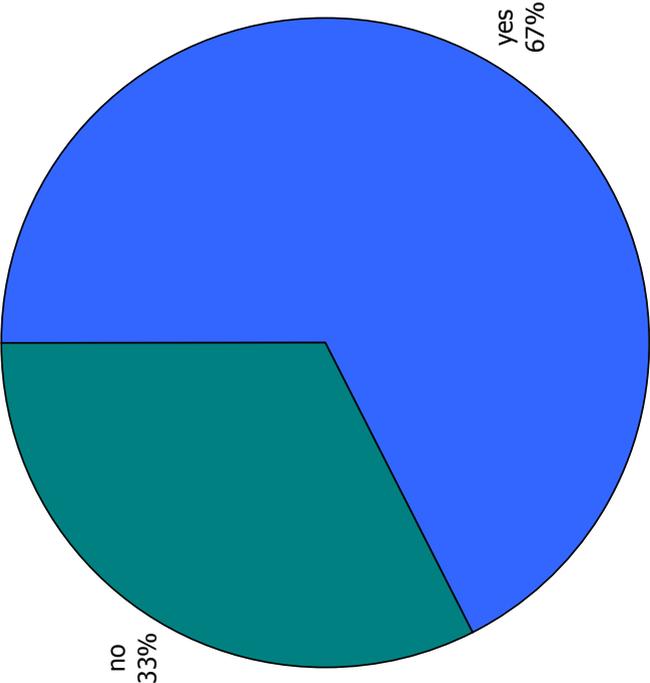
How did you come to the idea of choosing Romania?



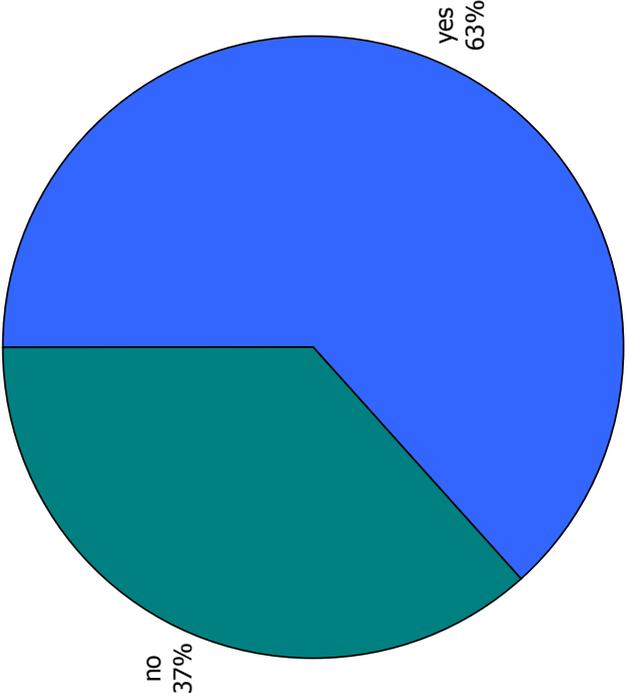
Did you have previous expat experience before coming to Romania?



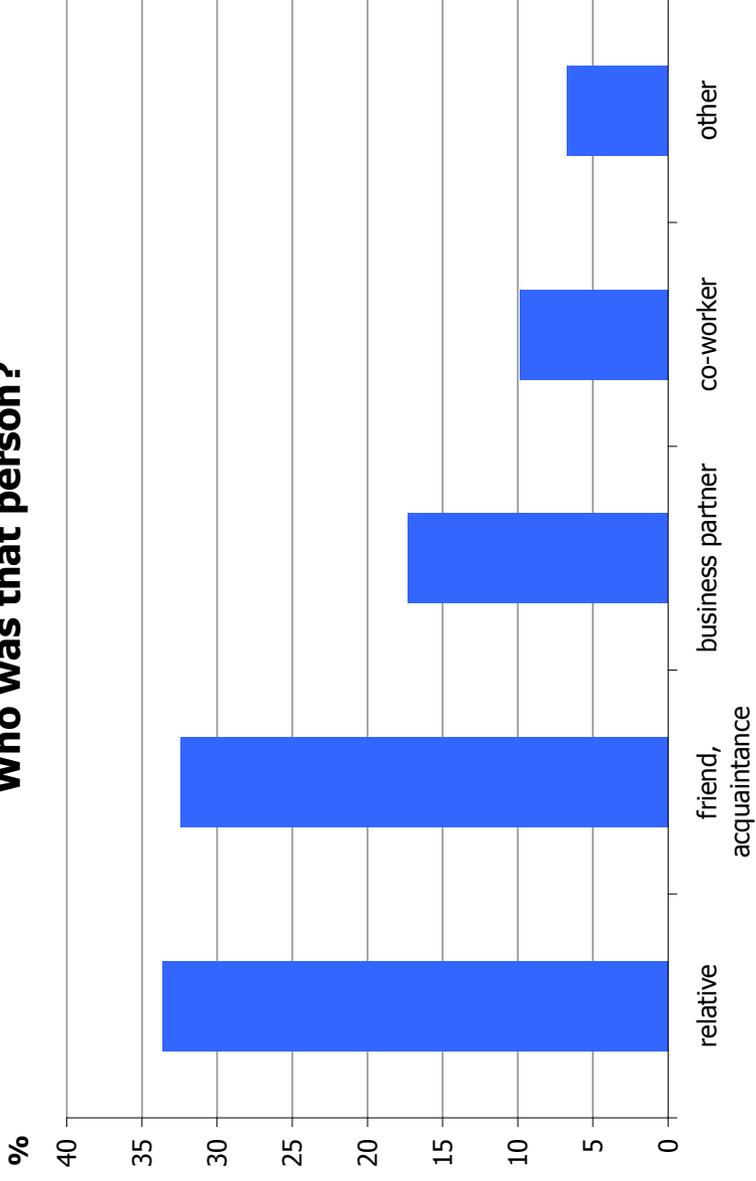
Was the visa regime prior to 2000 a factor in your decision to come to Romania?



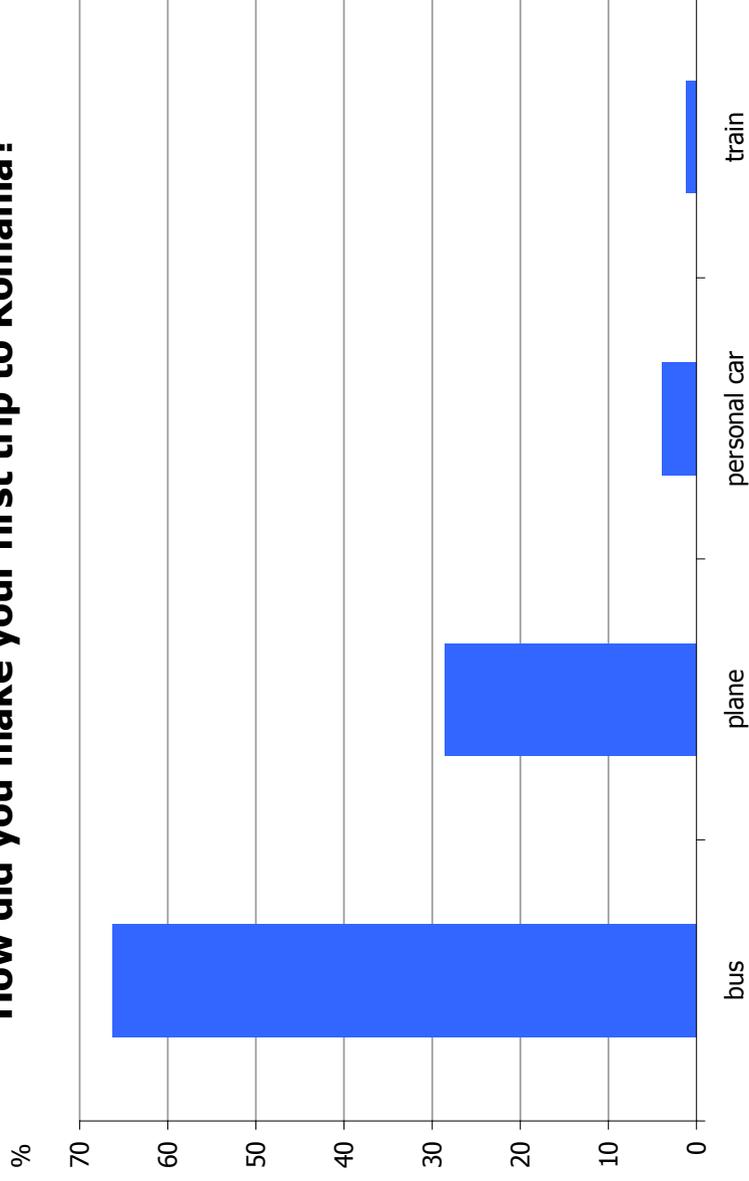
Prior to coming to Romania, did you know someone who went to Romania?



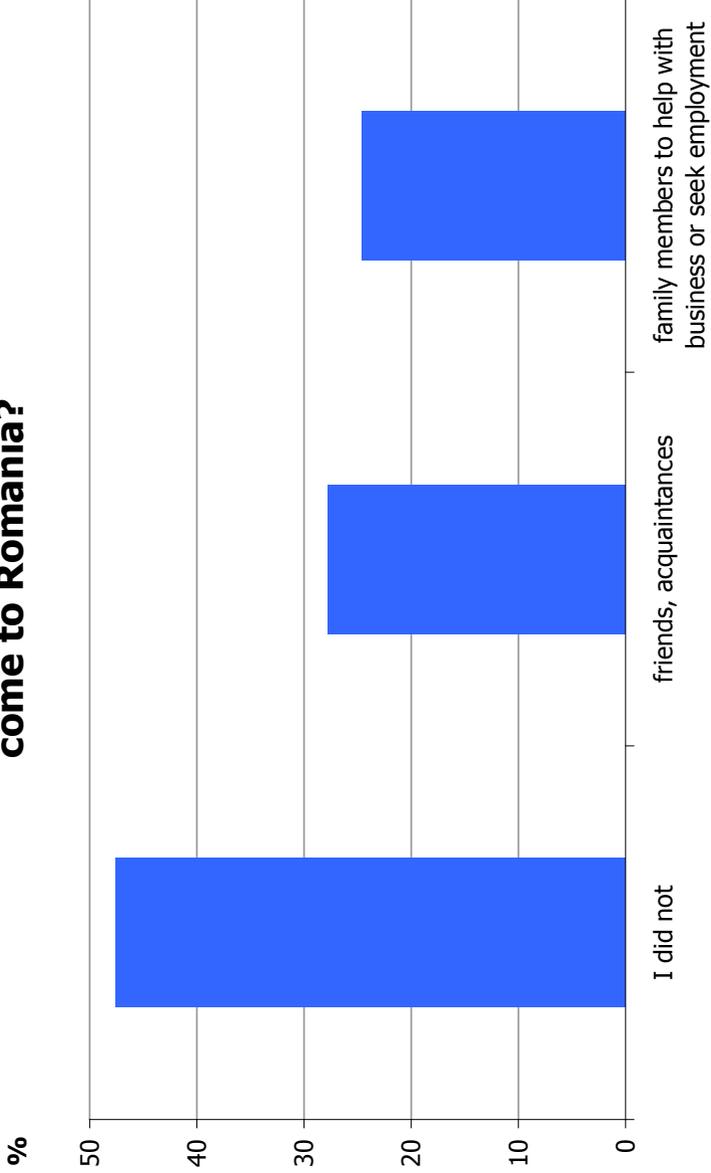
Who was that person?



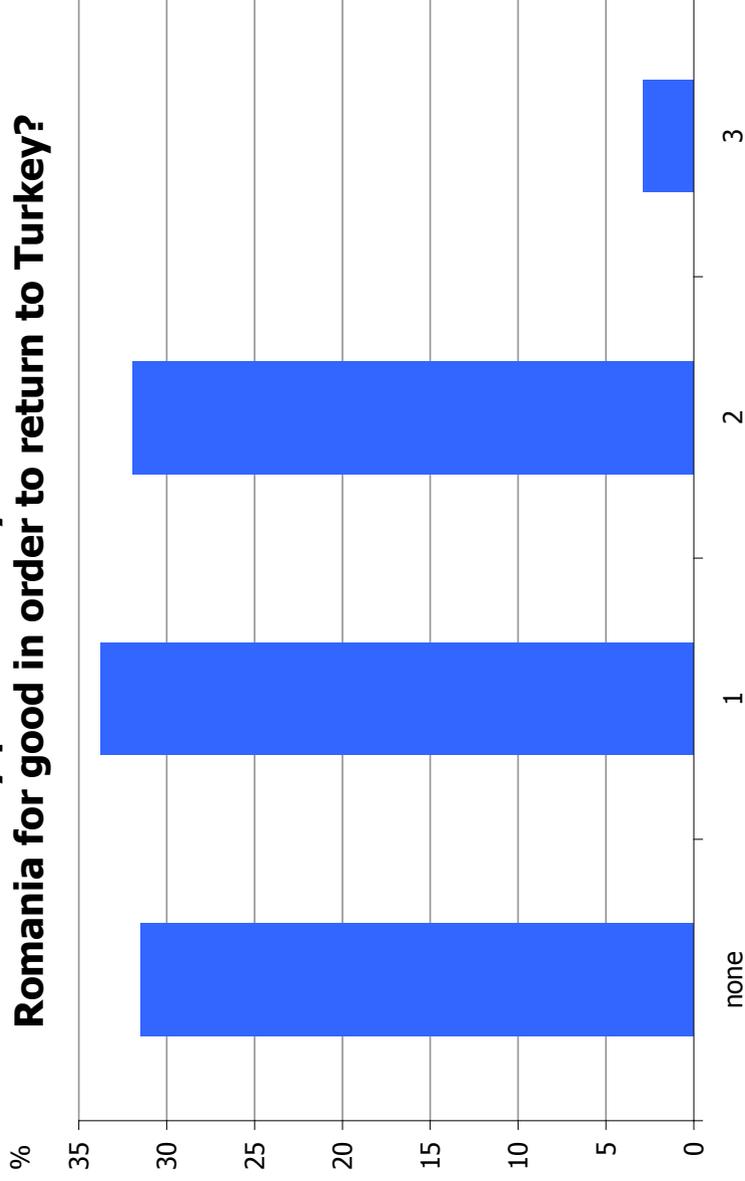
How did you make your first trip to Romania?



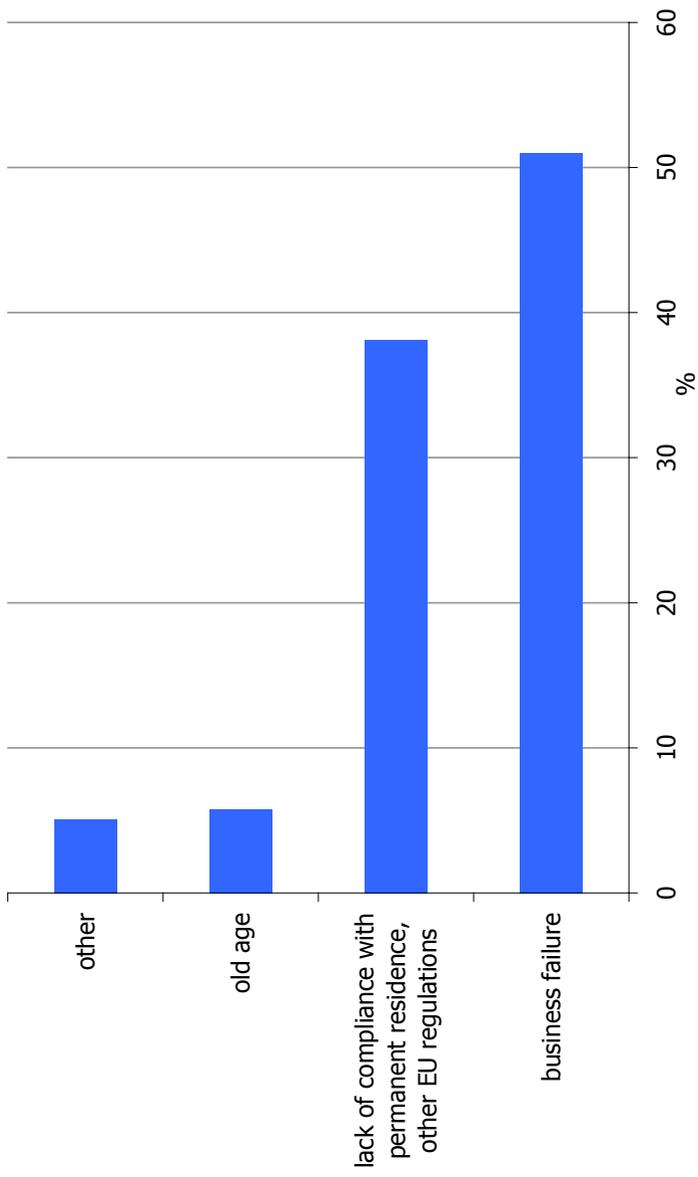
Did you invite someone else from Turkey to come to Romania?



How many persons do you know who left Romania for good in order to return to Turkey?



What were their reasons to leave?



Economic life in Romania

An expat has many issues to solve on the road to achieving his life plan, but the real challenge is the insertion in a new economic environment, different from the country of origin. The wellbeing of himself and his family depend on the success or failure on the labour market or in business.

Turkish expats are active persons, with a job or a business. The Turkish immigrant community in Bucharest is impressive through its entrepreneurial traits: one in two (52%) started a business. Most of them (55%) perceived the existence of business opportunities in Romania, have taken risks and invested capital. Every sixth Turkish investor pursued a business idea provided by a onetime partner. Some had already gained business experience in Turkey, while others ventured for the first time into the risky world of business.

"The Investors' Pyramid" is an adequate description of the risks: almost half of those who opened a business (47%) invested less than 1,000 Euro at the beginning, while at the top of the pyramid are those that invested more than 50,000 Euro (8 %).

Whether they are business owners or employees, a quarter of Turkish immigrants work in small and medium-sized businesses; five times less are employed by large corporations. They are to be found in the most varied economic sectors: manufacturing and marketing of textile products, import and distribution of foodstuffs, bakeries, the gambling industry, transport, international trade with consumer products, etc. Few of them (3%) work in multinational corporations (U.S. or Western European), most are involved with Turkish owned for-profit organizations.

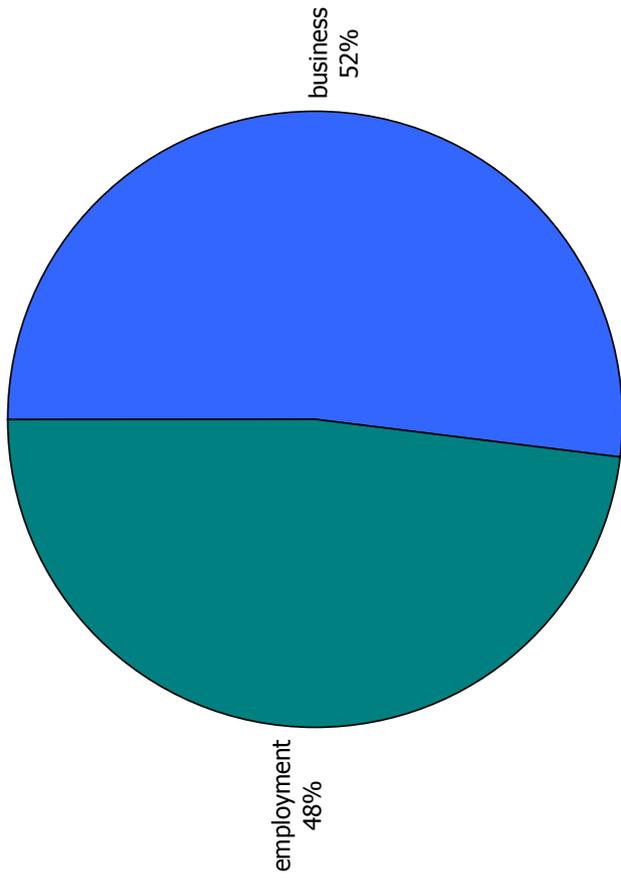
Living alongside Romanians lead to a predictable result: nine out of ten Turks use Romanian to communicate with Romanian employees, co-workers or business contacts.

On the co-working relationship with Romanians, the assessments made by respondents are guided by

inter-cultural comparisons between the economic environment of the home country (and other countries where they experienced) and the one in Romania. These assessments refer to the labour market (moderate wages, the variety of human resources) and, especially, the quality of Romanians: their technological skills (71%), having sympathy, not prone to conflict, a high intellectual level, easy to communicate with and foreign language skills. Working with Romanians does not entail only advantages but also difficulties: lack of motivation (85%) and work discipline, too much interest in holidays and days off, rigidity in negotiations on working time extension, etc.

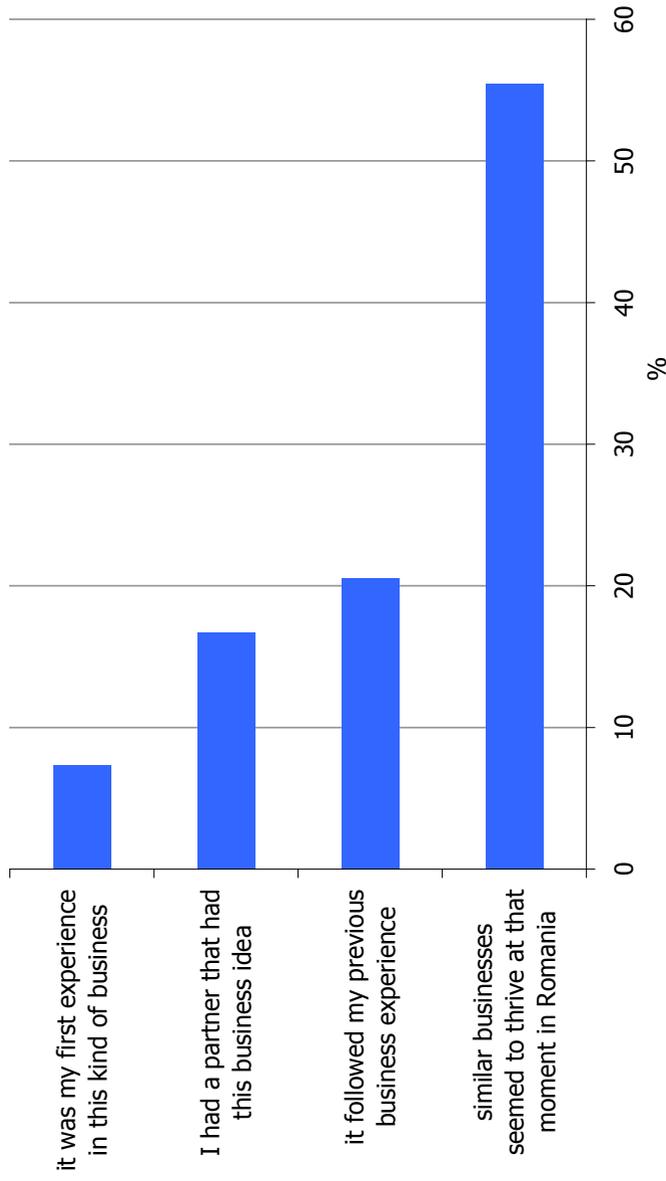
Business or career success is observable in the assets owned by Turkish expats in Romania. They own apartments or houses (44%), factories, warehouses and stores (28%), land (11%), which point to long term economic projects in Romania. Through labour and entrepreneurship, Turkish immigrants add value to the economy, create jobs, increase tax receipts to the country's budget, and make a contribution to the economic development of Romania.

Your stay in Romania is mainly for...?

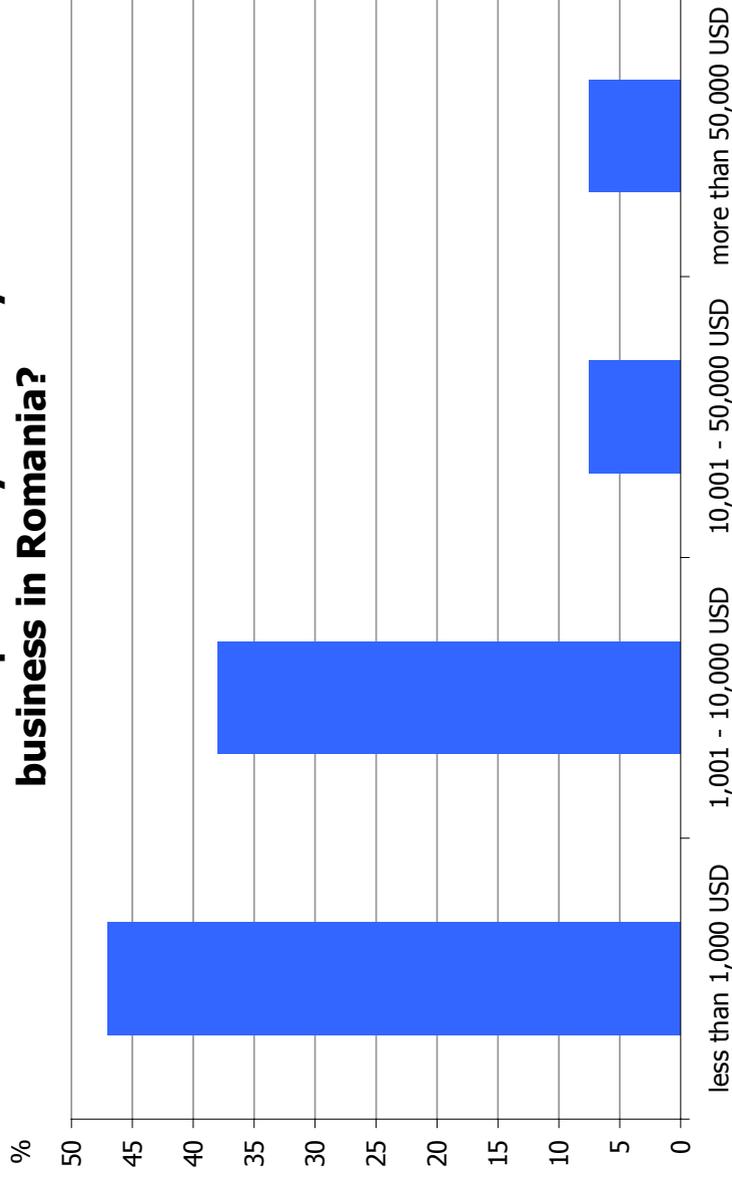


Why did you choose this particular business

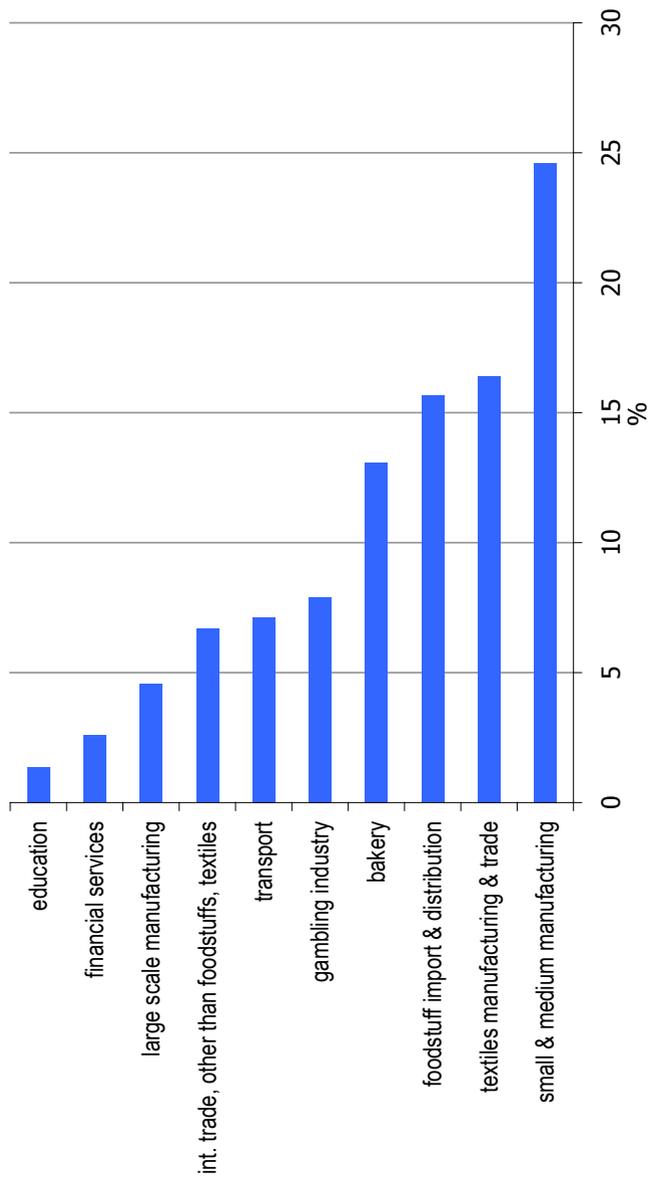
(business owners only)?



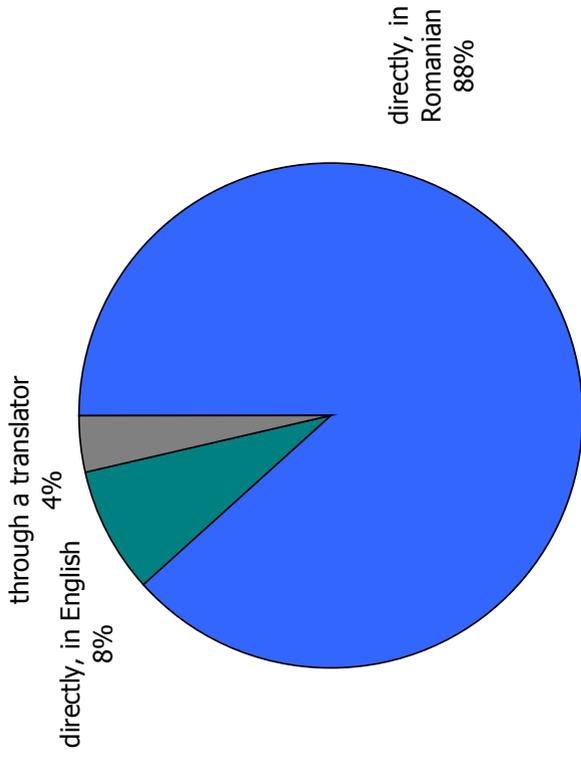
With how much capital did you start your first business in Romania?



In what type of economic activity are you involved in Romania? (employees & business owners)



How do you mainly communicate with Romanian employees, co-workers?



Kindly state three (3) main advantages of working with Romanians

(multiple choice)

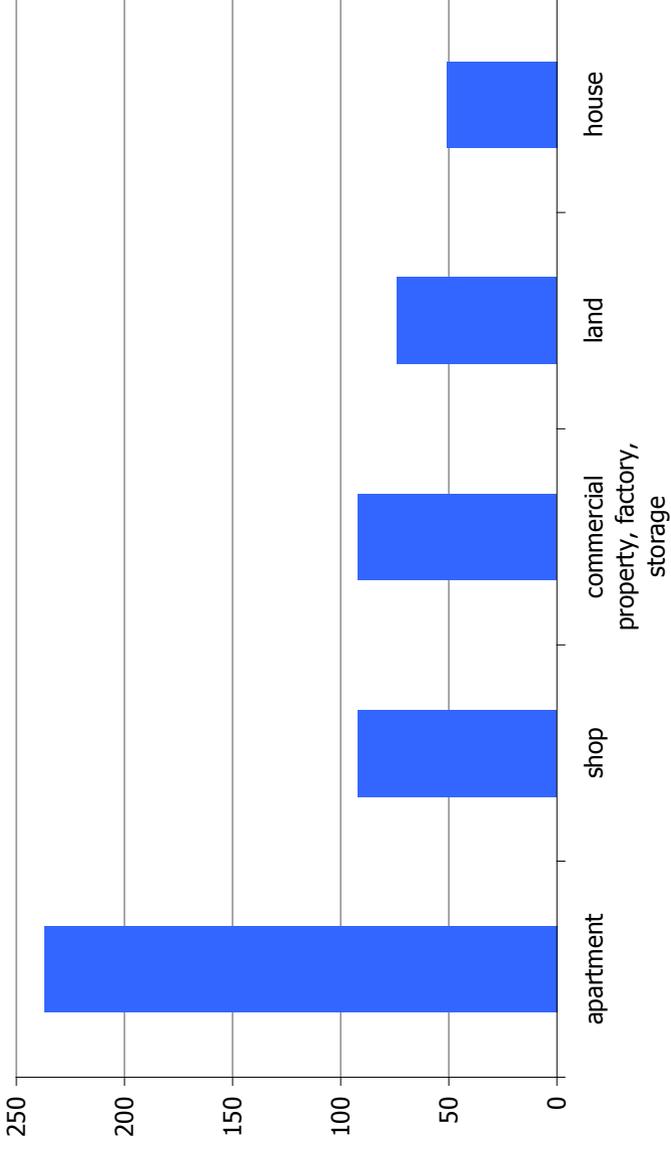
technological skills	467
moderate salaries	453
sympathy	408
human resources variety	370
less personal conflict	369
intellectual level	356
easy to communicate	265
knowledge of foreign language	234

Kindly state three (3) main disadvantages of working with Romanians

(multiple choice)

lack of work discipline	431
limited interest towards the work	355
too much interest in vacancies and holidays	261
when offered to stay further in the job	243
no elasticity in working time extension	237
lack of professional skills – other than technological	237
no elasticity in professional job definition	178
lack of motivation to work	173
lack of notice prior to leaving the job	147
being too much bounded to previously stated working conditions	126

Do you own property in Romania? (multiple answer)



Family and social life in Romania

Few of the Turkish expatriates live alone; nine out of ten of those based in Bucharest have a partner. Of these, a quarter had a previous family experience that ended in divorce.

Seven out of ten Turks were already married when they came to Romania. An overwhelming proportion (80%) had their family join them sooner or later, which shows that the new life project is a long term one. The motives for this move vary, but the main reason is that in this way they could take better care of their family. The existence of a Turkish community and international schools are other additional reasons.

Over 94 per cent of the Turkish expatriates living in Bucharest have at least one child. Their families, whether they live in Turkey or Romania, have an average

of 2.11 children. While this would point to a fertility rate higher than in Europe and in Romania, it is worth considering that it is markedly lower than the 5.5 children on average from a generation ago in the Turkish expatriates' parent families.

More than a quarter of the expats were married while in Romania, in most cases with Romanian women (26%). Three out of four of those based in Bucharest met future life partner at work.

Few of the expats have received residence permits in Romania due on marriage with a Romanian citizen (11%). Most of them have received either because they have a business (49%) or because of a permanent job.

Marriage with a Romanian woman, having children and citizenship are *strong reasons remain in Romania*. For others, remaining in Romania is the better option due to perceived difficulties of integration in the business environment in Turkey or because they have a successful business and / or property.

Religion is an important feature of social life for the Turkish expat community in Bucharest. All residents declared their affiliation to Islam. However, the intensity of religious feelings varies, which is observable in their religious behaviour. Three in ten reported praying five times a day; two others go to the mosque at least twice a month, mainly for Friday prayers. A third of the expats go to the mosque only to the great feasts or *bairams*. Finally, some (16%) of the expats, although belonging to a religion, do not practice it.

Work and business, family and religion are very important components of social life but they do not cover all the richness and complexity of Turkish expats' social life. Turks have many contacts beyond the frontiers of their community and share with Romanians the opportunities and challenges that are to be found in the economic environment, the successes and failures, the satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the way Romania is going.

They observe, compare, evaluate and identify critical points in the evolution of the social environment in which they build their new live. The *agenda of changes*

proposed to Romanians cover a wide range of topics such as the economy, health care, social cohesion, behavior in public and housing.

In the first place, work discipline should increase (66%) in the economy. In addition, the construction of a national road network would be needed (23%). There are suggestions for better support for agriculture and small businesses. They show solidarity with Romanian doctors and teachers whose salaries should be increased. A third of the Turks expats believe health care services should be improved.

Two thirds pointed to car traffic as an issue in Bucharest and the lack of parking space. Other reported issues relate to dog owners (that do not clean up after their pets), the number of stray dogs in the streets, people who spit in public, etc.

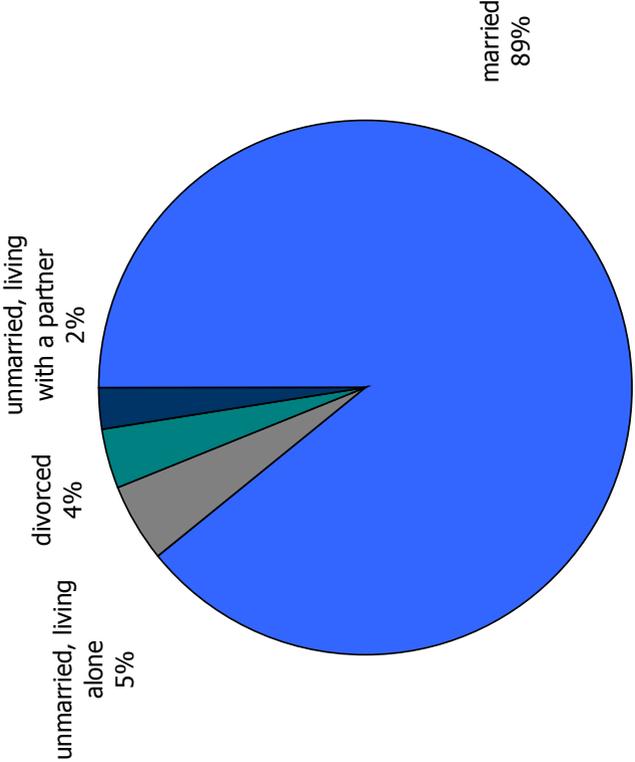
Turkish expats believe that the quality of housing, especially the flats, would increase if they were cleaned, painted, upgraded and the availability for separate

meters for gas, electricity and water consumptions would be increased.

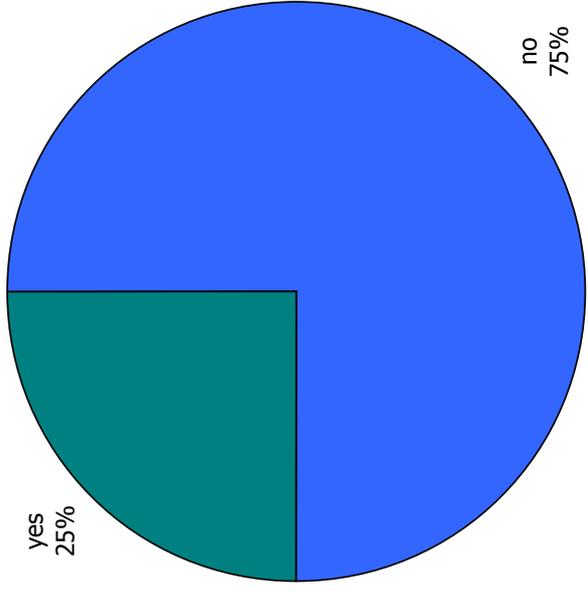
Important segments of the Turkish community (12-18%) suggest the solving of persistent social issues: street children, drugs and alcohol abuse at an early age or the education of Roma (Gypsies).

Every tenth expat believes that Romanians should better preserve and uphold their national identity.

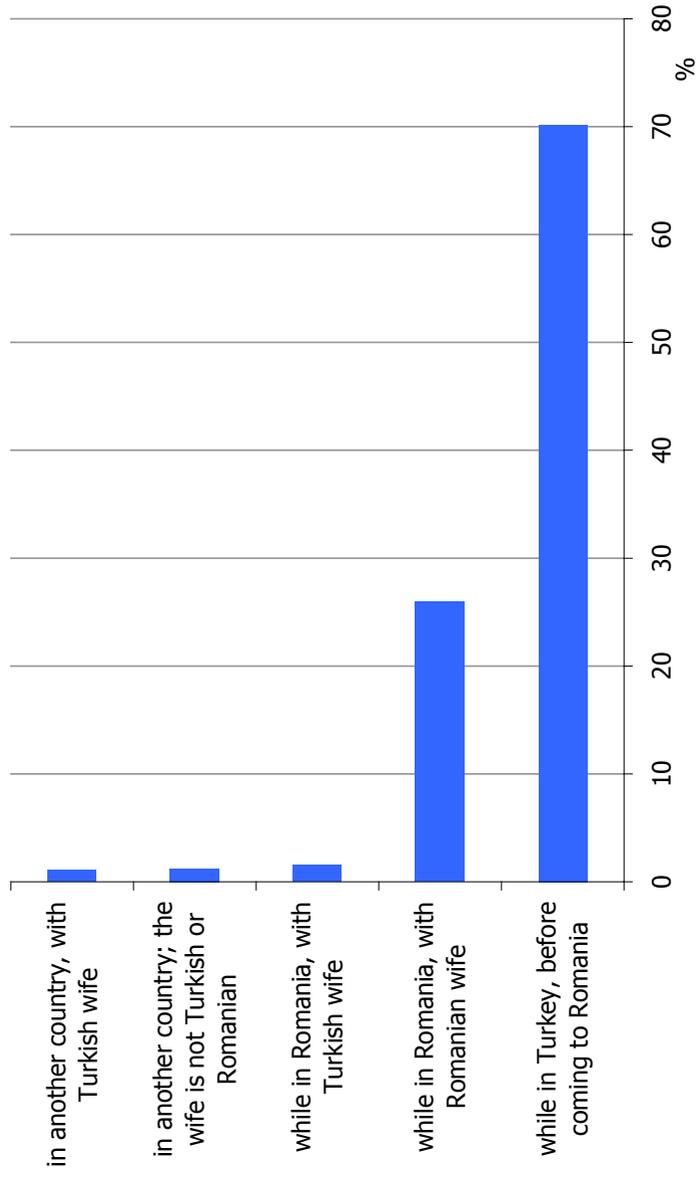
What is your marital status?



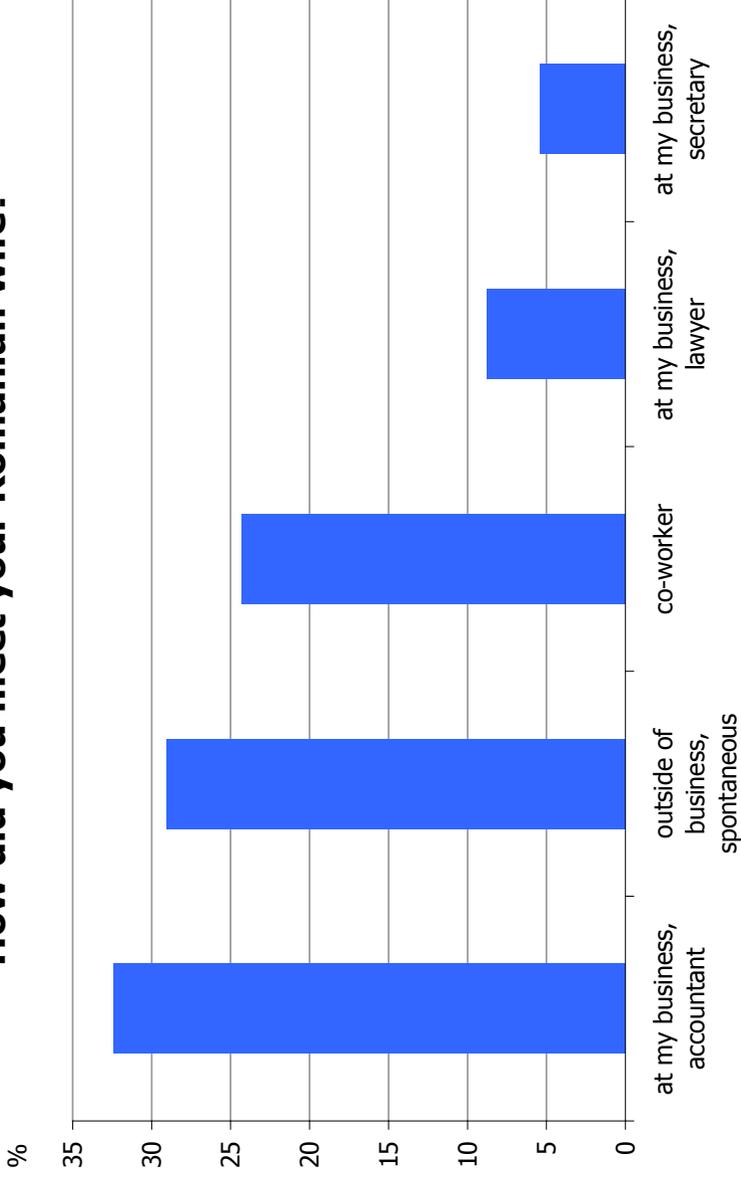
Did you have a previous marriage which resulted in divorce?



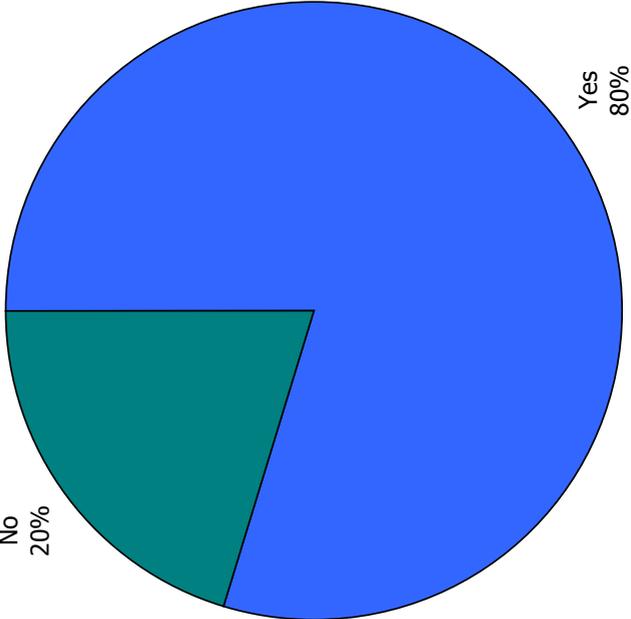
Your present marriage started...



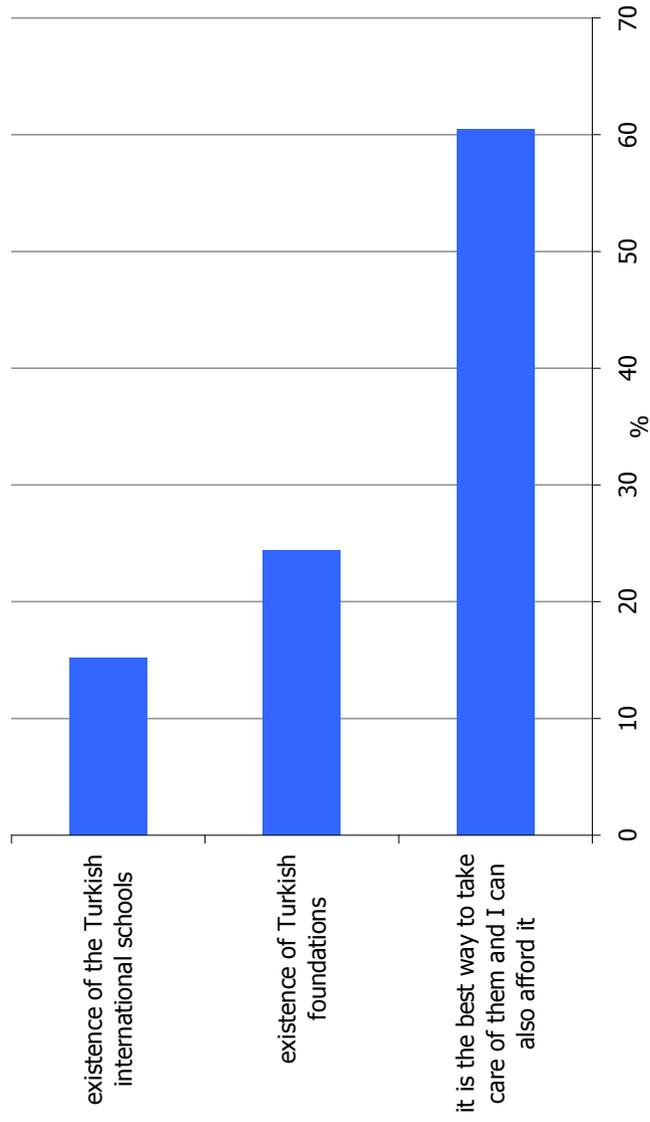
How did you meet your Romanian wife?



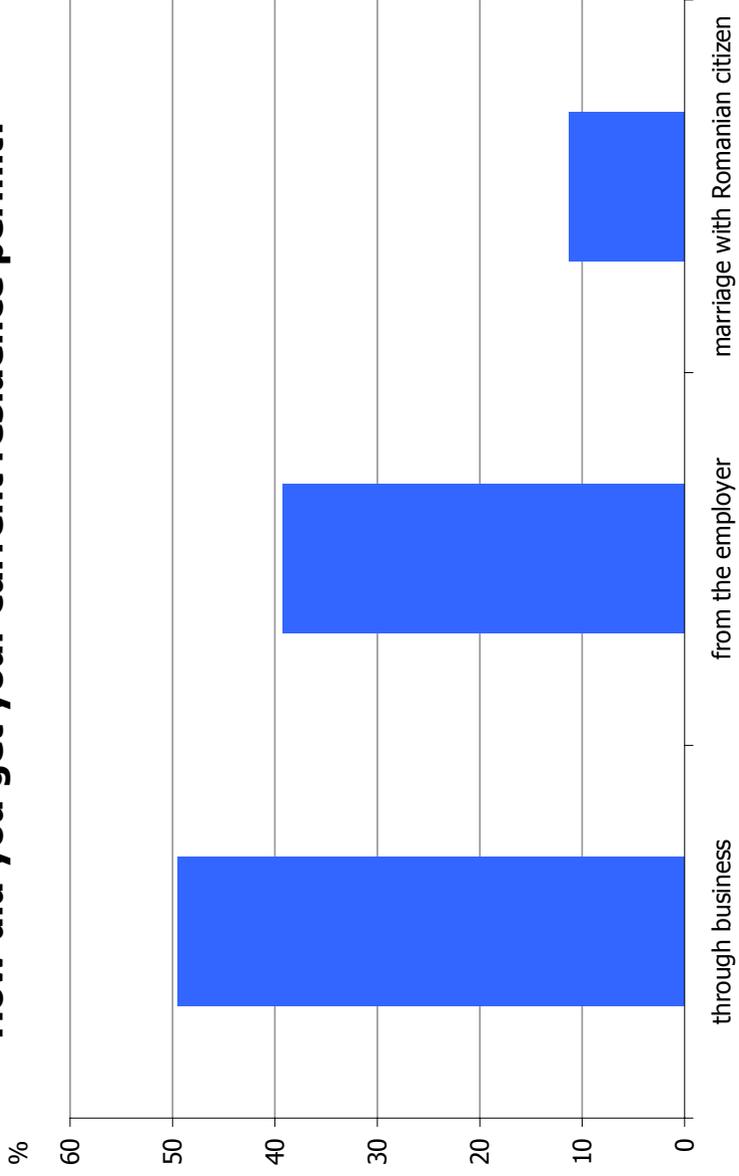
Did you bring your family over here from Turkey?



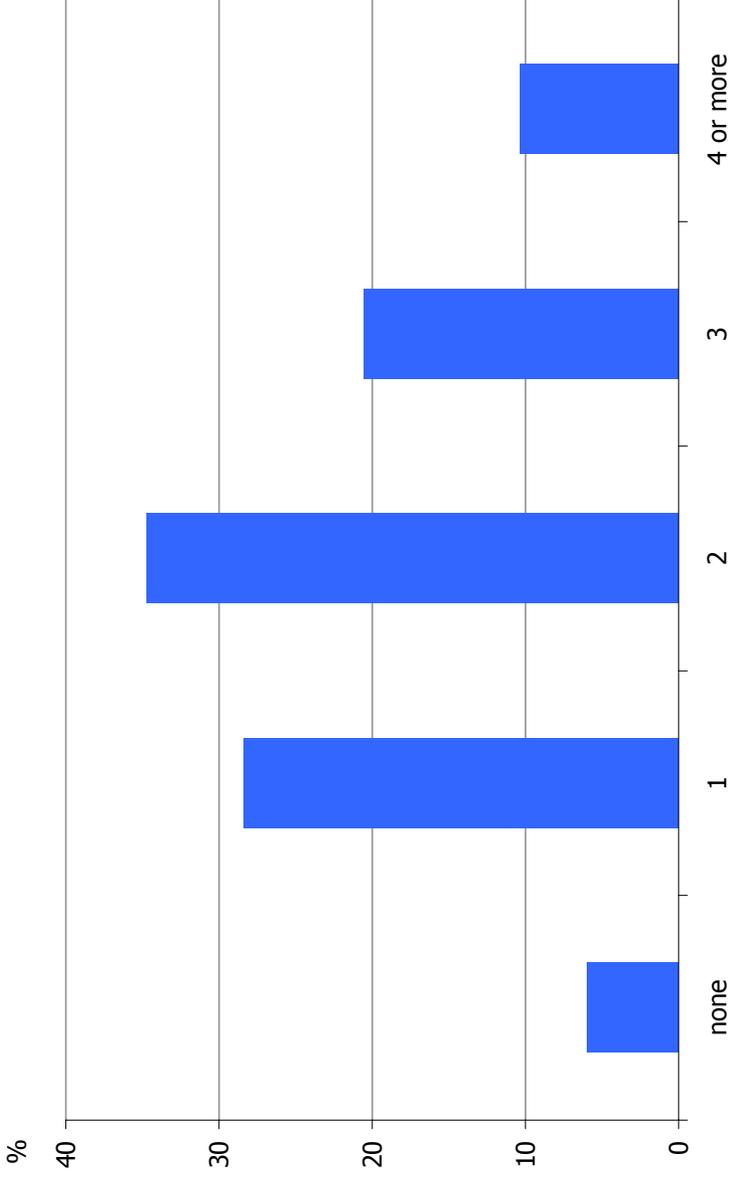
What was the motivation for bringing the family over to Romania?



How did you get your current residence permit?

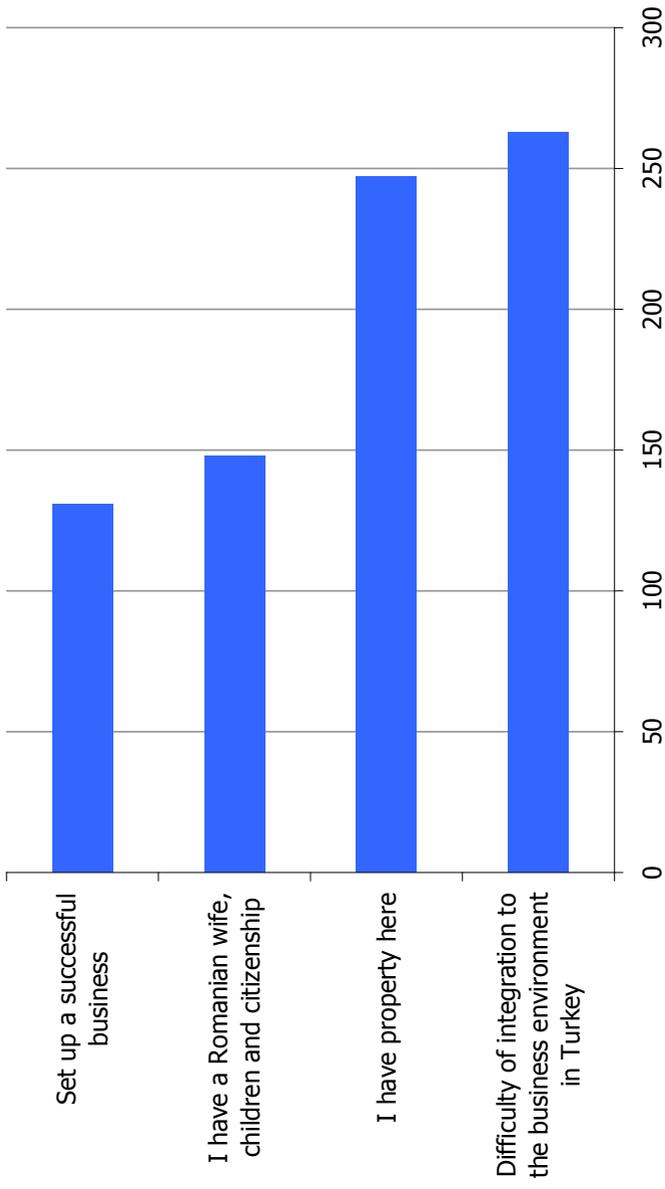


Number of children



Why would you remain in Romania?

(multiple answers)



**Which are the top three (3) things that
Romanians should change about their
country? (multiple answers)**

traffic problem in Bucharest	450
work discipline	436
parking problem in Bucharest	341
pets excrement in the streets should be immediately cleaned by the owner	331
street dogs	269
spitting in the streets should be prohibited	243
health facilities	232
there should be separate counters outside the apartments for gas, electricity, hot & cold water	203
nationwide auto transport roads should be built	154
apartment blocks should be painted, cleaned and modernized	135
street children	120
drug usage	100
salaries should be increased for doctors and	88

teachers

education of Gypsies 80

alcohol consumption at an early age 79

small scale manufacturing should be supported 78

national identity should be conserved 65

agriculture should be supported 63

snow should be cleared by municipalities 45

Relations and attitudes regarding Turkey

The distance between Bucharest, the economic and political capital of Romania, and Istanbul is less than 450 Kilometres. The journey takes an hour by flight or half a day by car. This degree of proximity is very different in comparison with the situation of other Turkish communities further west on the European continent, such as in Germany. The perception of distance from and relation towards the home country is therefore markedly different.

The number of visits to Turkey made by the head of households each year varies, with a majority (54%) going back two times a year or less. A significant minority (40%) make the trip several times a year, during the big holidays or *bairams*, sometimes using as opportunity Romanian public holidays. In addition, a much lesser minority (6%) return monthly.

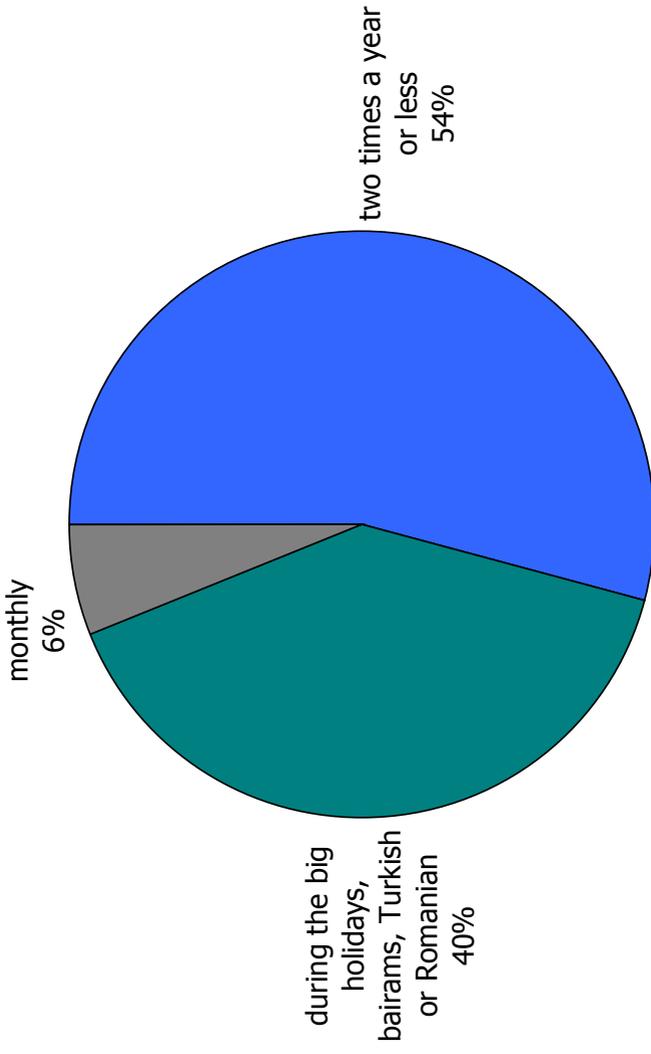
Pointing to social bonds other than within the nuclear family is the financial support given to family or friends back in Turkey. Half of head of households reported providing different levels of financial support. Considering this figure, we should keep in mind that 20% percent did not bring their family (wife and children) to Romania. The level of financial support varies, with a significant majority of over 80% sending less than the equivalent of 5,000 euros each year. Within this category, almost half send even less than 1,000 euros. Overall, less than 15% send more than 5,000 euros, with very few cases above 10,000.

Another dimension of the economic relation with Turkey features long/term investments in businesses or assets. A significant minority, close to one half (46%), have purchased a property back in Turkey since coming to Romania. Three quarters of these head of households are business owners. In addition, almost 40% of this group also keep a stake in business back home.

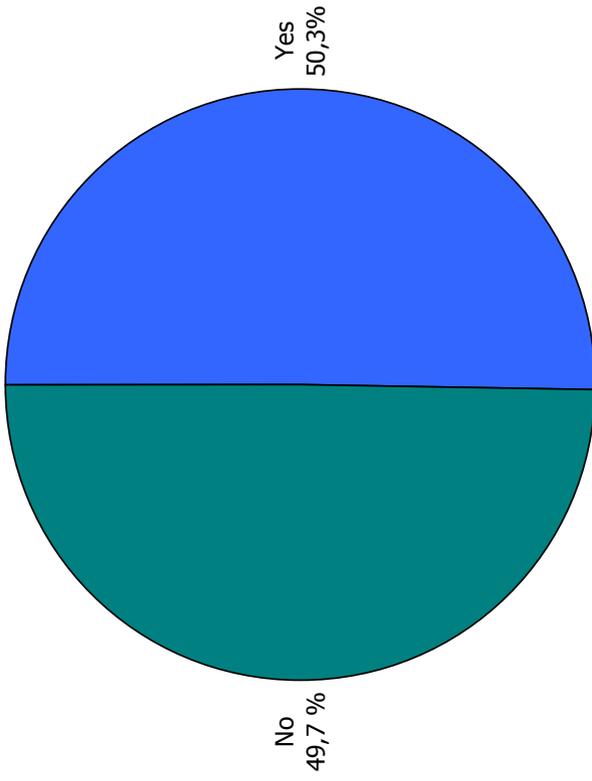
The great majority (93%) of Turkish expats living in Bucharest do not see themselves returning to Turkey

either in the near or distant future. As we have seen, the social and economic connection with Romania is very strong for most of them. In most cases, their families reside here and most of them enjoy economic success. Against this prospect, resettling in Turkey carries the perception of a risky move from an economic viewpoint. Under these circumstances, the Turkish expat community looks set to remain one of Bucharest's culturally and economic enriching features.

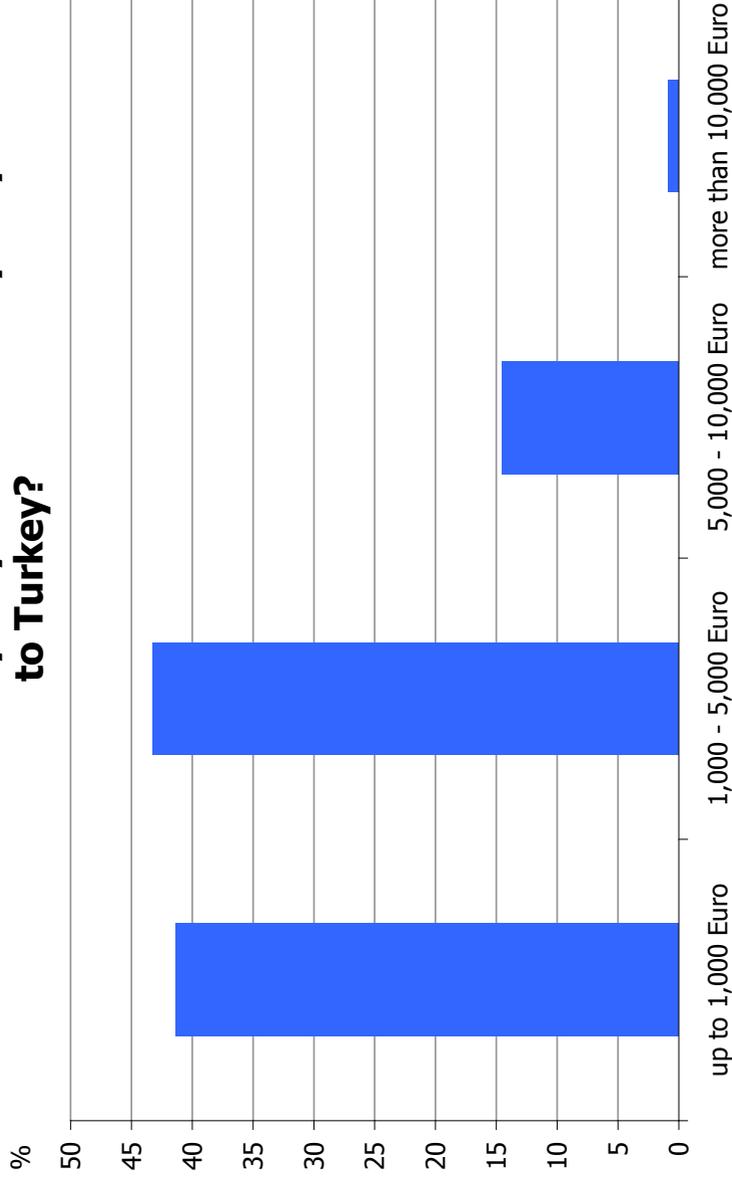
How often do you visit Turkey each year?



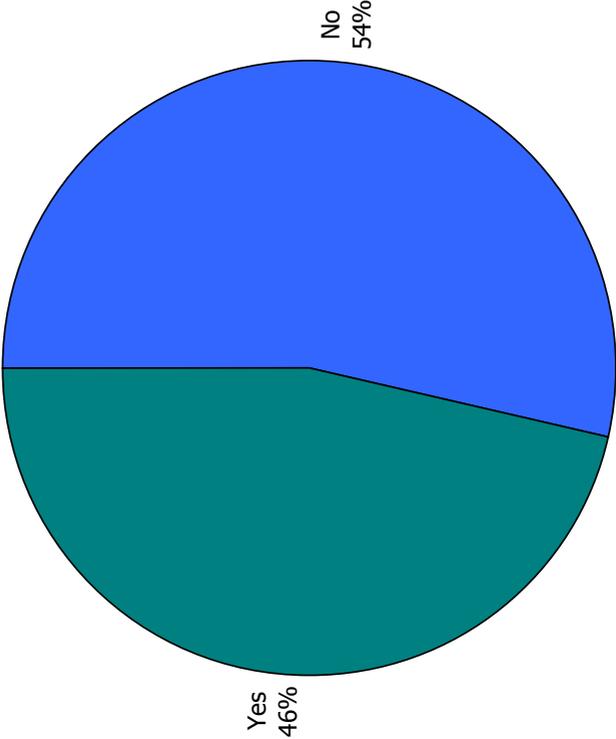
Do you support family or friends in Turkey?



How much money do you send back yearly to Turkey?



Did you buy property in Turkey after coming to Romania?



**Do you intend to return to Turkey
in the near or distant future?**

