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INVITED ARTICLE

# Flourishing in Türkiye: A comprehensive country-specific analysis of wellbeing-related outcomes in the Global Flourishing Study

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**Abstract:** Measures of flourishing provide a comprehensive assessment of multiple facets of wellbeing, broadening how wellbeing can be studied and promoted. The current study uses large-scale data collected by the Global Flourishing Study, which includes nationally representative samples from 202,898 participants from 22 countries around the world. Specifically, it presents an analysis of 69 wellbeing outcomes in the Türkiye sample ($N$ = 1,473), examining demographic and socioeconomic correlates of wellbeing while comparing Türkiye's average scores of wellbeing with the pooled estimates for the combined set of all 22 countries included in the Global Flourishing Study. The analyses revealed disparities in wellbeing, with young people and ethnic minorities generally reporting lower wellbeing across most outcomes. Individuals aged 50 and older and frequent religious service attenders tended to report greater wellbeing. Those with higher education reported greater personal wellbeing but lower satisfaction with the social-political context. Compared to the pooled cross-country estimates, Türkiye scored lower across most psychological and social wellbeing outcomes, while some religion/spirituality outcomes were higher in Türkiye. We contextualize these results with respect to current and historical cultural, political, and socioeconomic conditions of Türkiye, and point to future research directions. The findings from this research can inform policies that aim at promoting wellbeing in an equitable and effective manner in the context of Türkiye.

**Keywords:** Global Flourishing Study, human flourishing, wellbeing, Türkiye, international, cross-cultural, disparities

## 1. Introduction

Questions about what makes life good and worth living have preoccupied humankind for centuries. One of the key concepts that emerged from this inquiry is wellbeing, which has been defined as "the relative attainment of a state in which a person's life is good, as they pertain to that individual" (VanderWeele & Lomas, 2023, p. 37). Wellbeing has more recently been

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conceptualized as part of the broader concept of flourishing (VanderWeele & Johnson, 2025a), "a state in which all aspects of a person's life are good, including the contexts in which that person lives" (VanderWeele & Lomas, 2023, p. 37; Lomas et al., 2024; VanderWeele, 2017). Construing flourishing in a multi-faceted way enables a systemic perspective that draws attention to other levels of analysis, such as familial relationships, social interactions, communities, cultures, values, and various other structures within a society (Meadows, 2008; VanderWeele & Johnson, 2025b). In doing so, measurement of flourishing expands upon individualistic approaches to wellbeing that have been prevalent in scientific inquiry (Joshanloo, 2014) and provides an opportunity to understand wellbeing more comprehensively.

Relatedly, an important advancement in the science of wellbeing has been to examine wellbeing with a cross-cultural approach. Wellbeing theories have typically been informed by Western ideas, with studies often focusing on samples from developed nations in the West. Yet, a growing number of studies are aiming to provide comparative analyses of how wellbeing is understood and experienced in diverse cultural and socioeconomic contexts around the world (Höltge et al., 2023). Lomas et al. (2022), for instance, have shown that wellbeing concepts such as balance and harmony are important for people in Eastern cultures, reflecting long-standing philosophical traditions, emphasizing interdependence between individuals and their surrounding social and natural environments. These cross-national examinations help us build a more accurate understanding of wellbeing, underscoring the need for frameworks and measurement tools that capture relational, contextual, and holistic dimensions of flourishing. They also provide insights into the societal factors that may shape human flourishing.

Motivated by these developments, the current study uses data from the first wave of the Global Flourishing Study (GFS) to explore the state of wellbeing in Türkiye. Wellbeing was measured in a comprehensive way, encompassing psychological, social, and physical wellbeing, as well as socioeconomic factors, religion/spirituality, personality characteristics, and family dynamics. Using this rich set of measures available in the GFS, the present research examines how wellbeing—assessed through a broad range of indicators —is experienced in the context of Türkiye. Specifically, we explore sociodemographic (e.g., age, gender) correlates of wellbeing in Türkiye and compare the average wellbeing in Türkiye for 69 outcomes with the pooled estimates from the combined set of 22 countries in the GFS.

### *1.2 Wellbeing and flourishing in Türkiye*

#### *1.2.1 Türkiye context*

Türkiye, a country with a population of approximately 85 million, is located between Europe and West Asia. It covers a large territory of 785.347 km$^2$ and has 81 administrative provinces spread over different geographical regions. The country's strategic location between Europe and the Middle East has made it a cradle of many civilizations over time, such as the Byzantine, Roman, and Ottoman Empire, and has fostered the integration of European, Middle Eastern, and Central Asian traditions into a rich and complex cultural landscape.

Surrounded by both Christian and Muslim countries, the dominant religion in Türkiye (estimated to be 99% of the population) is Muslim, and the official language is Turkish, with Kurdish and several other minority languages also spoken in some regions. The Kurds represent the largest ethnic minority in Türkiye, with a smaller percentage belonging to various other ethnic

identities such as Circassians and Armenians, as well as religious minorities such as Alevis. The shared history, despite territorial conflicts, has fostered many shared cultural elements between Turks and other ethnic groups, including Greeks, Armenians, and Kurds.

Türkiye has high rates of both emigration and migration, and it hosts one of the largest refugee populations. According to a 2023 report by TurkStat, the officially registered foreign population in Türkiye is 1.3 million, not accounting for undocumented migrants residing in the country. While immigration has mainly been driven by the Syrian crisis, wars, and geopolitical tensions in the global arena, including those involving the Middle East and Russia, emigration mainly stems from the intention to find better employment opportunities and higher living standards elsewhere. The dynamics of migration are further influenced by regional conflicts, global economic and political factors, economic instability, and the political climate.

Türkiye is a Republic, and according to its constitution, a democratic, secular, and social state. In the late 1920s, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the newly founded Republic of Türkiye underwent a series of political, legal, cultural, and social transformations aimed at establishing a secular nation-state. The ideas of Westernization and modernization emerged in this period, and radical reforms led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk transformed the educational, political, and economic structures of the country. Reforms such as women's suffrage, the adoption of the Latin alphabet, democratization, industrialization, and urbanization brought Türkiye closer to the Western world. Further political and economic transformations occurred in the 1980s when neoliberal policies and economic globalization spurred economic growth, but they also exacerbated social inequalities within the country. In recent years, confidence in democracy, especially with respect to civil liberties and institutional trust, has been in decline (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2024).

The Turkish economy in the 2020s has been facing a mix of challenges and opportunities, shaped by both domestic policies and global dynamics. Following a period of significant currency volatility, high inflation, and external debt pressures in the late 2010s and early 2020s, Türkiye has been working to stabilize its economy through monetary policy adjustments, structural reforms, and efforts to attract foreign investment. The inflation rate was 72% during 2022, the period during which the GFS data was collected, but has since decreased to 35% in 2025 (TurkStat, 2022; 2025). While the unemployment rate stands at 8.4%, self-employment has consistently grown, constituting approximately 28% of total employment according to World Bank indicators (The World Bank, 2024). However, rising prices in energy, food, and housing have exacerbated income inequality in the country. Although Türkiye has social welfare policies for health, social assistance, unemployment, and support for family and children, these initiatives mainly target specific groups and do not provide broad, universal benefits for all. Reflecting some of these socioeconomic challenges, the country's birth rate has dropped to 1.51 births per woman (Krzyżanowska, 2024).

Türkiye is considered an emerging economy and is the 17th largest economy in the world (World Bank, 2023). Despite its relatively young population compared to many European countries, with a median age of 31 (TurkStat, 2024), the challenges facing younger people, such as high unemployment rates in this group, point to economic, political, and social disparities in the country. Gender is another factor contributing to social inequality. Although the Human Development Index (HDI) in Türkiye has improved over time, when compared to countries with high HDI levels, the Gender Development Index (GDI) is far lower than in other countries

(UNDP, 2022). This might be due (in part) to traditional gender role socialization, with women having more limited employment opportunities and greater responsibility for childcare, which can create additional strain for employed women. The labor force statistics show that the number of women in leadership positions in the economic and political arena is low (TurkStat, 2023). At the same time, physical violence against women and child marriages persist as important concerns regarding the wellbeing of women in Türkiye (United Nations, 2025).

According to Hofstede (1991, 2010), Türkiye is one of the countries that scores high on collectivism. For instance, family is highly valued, and maintaining togetherness and harmony within the family and community is considered essential (Kagitcibasi, 2007). A recent review of studies from the Middle Eastern context highlighted the significant role of the family and social support from extended family in navigating the interface between work and family life (Rajadhyaksha & Baskurt, 2020). However, due to globalization, the rise of social media, and an increase in international travel, Turkish culture has increasingly incorporated both individualistic and collectivistic values over time. As a result, while collectivistic values such as family, tradition, and interdependence remain central, there is a growing emphasis on self, autonomy, and independence.

In the next sections, we provide an overview of the literature on wellbeing in Türkiye, starting with international comparisons and then its sociodemographic correlates.

### *1.2.2 Wellbeing and flourishing in Türkiye: International comparisons*

Türkiye is usually in the lower half of the global rankings (e.g., Gallup World Poll, 2022) in terms of life evaluations. For example, according to OECD Better Life Index (2020), Türkiye ranks lower in many key areas, such as life satisfaction, work-life balance, education, health, environmental quality, and social connections, compared to other countries. Respondents in Türkiye score an average of 4.7 out of 10 in life satisfaction assessments, which is lower than the OECD average of 6.7. GDP per capita in OECD countries is far greater than in Türkiye, which may partly explain the differences in life satisfaction between these countries. In the 2024 World Happiness Report, Türkiye is ranked 98th out of 143 countries, with scores on life evaluation averaged over the years 2021-2023 (World Happiness Report, 2025). This largely corresponds to the time when Global Flourishing Study data were collected in Türkiye.

In terms of socioeconomic factors, Türkiye's country-level economic development indicators are relatively good; its overall growth rates and debt-to-GDP ratio are lower than those of many developed countries (Bulus, 2020; International Monetary Fund, 2023). However, challenges persist, with a relative poverty rate of 13.6% and an unemployment rate of 8.4% (TurkStat, 2024), which is nearly double the OECD average of 4.6%. In addition, the average household income in Türkiye is also below the OECD average. The latest OECD report on quality of life (2024) covers several wellbeing indicators, such as income distribution, employment, health, education, and social security. A notable finding from the survey is that income inequality in Türkiye is among the highest compared to other countries. Specifically, the income of the wealthiest 20% of the population is 8.5 times higher than that of the poorest 20% of the population. It is important to note that international assessments and comparisons often focus on psychological outcomes or socioeconomic development, and they overlook aspects of wellbeing related to social life, community, or religion/spirituality. Furthermore, comparing Türkiye to OECD countries might be misleading, as Türkiye's income per capita is significantly lower than that of most OECD

economies. A better comparison could be made using other emerging economies with similar income levels.

*1.2.3 Wellbeing and flourishing in Türkiye: Demographic and socioeconomic comparisons*

Gender is one of the demographic variables that is part of ongoing debates and challenges in Türkiye. A recent Global Gender Gap report (2022) ranked Türkiye 124th out of 146 countries in terms of gender equity (World Economic Forum, 2022). There is a gender gap in labor force participation, with 71% of men participating compared to only 35% of women (TurkStat, 2024). Despite ongoing concerns about gender equality, data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (2022), which provides consistent measures of wellbeing in the country, show that women reported higher levels of happiness than men. Other studies show mixed results about how gender correlates with wellbeing. Some studies suggest that women report lower mental wellbeing scores than men (Kose, 2020; Karaman, 2021; Tirgil & Aygün, 2021), while others indicate that women are happier than men (Eren & Aşıcı, 2017) or find little evidence of gender difference (Duvar et al., 2025). These divergent findings could imply substantial heterogeneity in gender differences in wellbeing, suggesting that such differences may be shaped by other factors such as education, marital status, and geographic regions (Karaman, 2021).

Age is also related to wellbeing. Research on Turkish youth suggests that an increasing number of young people are unemployed, lonely, unhappy, and lacking hope (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2021). The youth unemployment (aged 15-24) rate is over 19%, indicating that Türkiye has one of the highest youth unemployment rates among OECD countries. Similarly, the percentage of youth who are not in education, employment, or training is high at 24% (TurkStat, 2024). Relatedly, a 'brain drain' pattern has been on the rise in the past few decades (TurkStat, 2023), which rose among higher education graduates from 1.6% in 2015 to 2.0% in 2023. Earlier studies identified a U-shaped relationship between age and wellbeing in Türkiye, suggesting that both younger and older people tend to report relatively high wellbeing (Tirgil & Aygün, 2021; Eren & Aşıcı, 2017). However, such trends may have shifted due to recent socioeconomic developments that challenge young people's wellbeing.

Regarding other sociodemographic factors, being married is generally associated with higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction in the Türkiye context (Sibel, 2008; Eren & Aşıcı, 2017; Tirgil & Aygün, 2021). One study reported a negative correlation between education and happiness (Eren & Aşıcı, 2017), while others found a positive association (Duvar et al., 2025; Cevik & Tasar, 2016). Research on socioeconomic factors suggests that higher income is generally associated with higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction (Eren & Aşıcı, 2017; Sibel, 2008), although a more recent study found that household income is not as crucial for mental health as non-financial factors like health and trust (Tirgil & Aygün, 2021). Employment status tends to impact wellbeing, with unemployment negatively affecting happiness (Sibel, 2008; Eren & Aşıcı, 2017). From a macro-level perspective, the challenges facing Türkiye are mostly economic and political in nature, including high inflation, currency devaluation, unemployment, and income inequality. These issues disproportionately affect socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, including minorities.

*1.3 The present study*

The GFS provides wellbeing assessments on 69 outcomes covering four thematic areas: i) multidimensional wellbeing, ii) religion and spirituality, iii) personality, and iv) family factors, providing a uniquely rich dataset that enables us to strengthen our current knowledge of wellbeing in various countries around the world. The current study takes advantage of data from the GFS to understand the state of wellbeing in Türkiye. It focuses on two main areas of investigation. First, it examines how wellbeing in Türkiye differs across sociodemographic groups, and second, it compares average wellbeing in Türkiye to all 22 countries in Wave 1 of the GFS combined. These objectives complement each other to provide a comprehensive descriptive analysis of wellbeing in the context of Türkiye. First, they reveal disparities of wellbeing within the country, which can provide insight into which groups may benefit from resources or support (Lee et al., 2022). At the same time, international comparisons inform us about how well the population of Türkiye overall is faring and point to challenges and opportunities to promote societal wellbeing.

## 2. Methods

The description of the methods below has been adapted from VanderWeele et al. (2025), which used GFS data. Further methodological detail is available elsewhere, including an overview of the GFS as a whole (Johnson et al., 2024) and its general methodology (Ritter et al., 2024); an initial questionnaire development report (Crabtree et al., 2021; 2024), as well as an updated account of the questionnaire development process (Lomas et al., 2025a), of which one aspect was a process piloting the items through cognitive interviewing (Cowden et al., 2025a; Johnson et al., 2023); the Wave 1 codebook (Markham et al., 2024); the survey sampling design for Wave 1 (Padgett et al., 2025b); the statistical analyses code (Padgett et al., 2024); the analytic methodology for demographic variation analyses for Wave 1 (Padgett et al., 2025a). The current paper, which focuses specifically on Türkiye, was pre-registered as part of a coordinated set of studies focusing on country-specific variation in flourishing. These coordinated analyses were pre-registered on October 15th, 2024 (https://doi.org/10.17605/osf.io/trcf3) (Lomas et al., 2024).

*2.1 Data*

The GFS is a study involving, in its first wave, 202,898 participants from 22 geographically and culturally diverse countries, with nationally representative sampling within each country, concerning the distribution and determinants of wellbeing. Wave 1 included the following countries and territories: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Egypt, Germany, Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China), India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Tanzania, Türkiye, the UK, and the US. The countries were selected to (a) maximize coverage of the world's population, (b) ensure geographic, cultural, and religious diversity, and (c) prioritize feasibility and existing data collection infrastructure. Data collection was carried out by Gallup Inc. Data for Wave 1 were collected principally during 2023, with some countries beginning data collection in 2022 and exact dates varying by country (Ritter et al., 2024). For Türkiye, the data collection for GFS took place between April 15th, 2023, and January 15th, 2024. Plans are in place to collect four additional waves of annual panel data on the participants. The precise sampling design to ensure nationally

representative samples varied by country, and further details are available elsewhere (Ritter et al., 2024). Survey items included aspects of flourishing such as subjective wellbeing, health, meaning, character, relationships, and financial stability (VanderWeele, 2017), plus other demographic, social, economic, political, religious, personality, childhood, community, health, and wellbeing variables. These data are publicly available through the Center for Open Science (https://www.cos.io/gfs). During the translation process, Gallup adhered to the TRAPD model (translation, review, adjudication, pretesting, and documentation) for cross-cultural survey research (Case et al., 2025); for additional details, see the questionnaire development process report (Lomas et al., 2025a). Details of specific constructs and the GFS papers analyzing them are provided in the introduction to this Special Issue (Lomas et al., 2025b).

*2.2 Sample*

The Türkiye sample consisted of 1,473 adults aged from 18 to 80+ years. As shown in Table 1, looking at the weighted characteristics of the sample from Türkiye, 46% were below 40 years of age, which shows a relatively young population. Forty-nine percent of the sample was female. The marital status within the sample reflected a distribution of 64% married and 26% single (never married), while 4.3% were widowed and 4.3% were divorced. The employment breakdown shows that 28% of the sample was employed by an employer, while 24% were classified as homemakers. The remaining 17% were self-employed, 14% retired, 7.3% students, and 5.9% were unemployed. Sixty-three percent of the sample attended religious services at least once a month, reflecting the religious fabric of the society. Participants were relatively educated: 70% of the sample had more than 8 years of education, indicating education beyond high school. A large majority of the sample was born in the country, while 4% were born in another country. 94% reported Muslim as their religious affiliation. In terms of their race and ethnicity, 70% identified as Turkish. The second largest ethnicity was Kurdish/Zaza, with 17%, followed by 3.5% Arabs, 1.7% Laz, and 1.3% Circassian. Other ethnicities represented included Armenian, Uyghur, Greek, Georgian, Azeri, Bosnian, and Albanian (less than 1% for each). Note that 3.9% for the "other" categories suggests that more ethnicities existed that were not captured by the response options in the GFS survey.

**Table 1.** *Nationally representative descriptive statistics for Türkiye*

| **Characteristic** | **N = 1,473**[1] |
|---|---|
| **Age group** | |
| 18-24 | 222 (15%) |
| 25-29 | 152 (10%) |
| 30-39 | 315 (21%) |
| 40-49 | 312 (21%) |
| 50-59 | 225 (15%) |
| 60-69 | 164 (11%) |
| 70-79 | 65 (4.4%) |
| 80 or older | 18 (1.2%) |
| (Missing) | 0 (0%) |

| Characteristic | N = 1,473[1] |
|---|---|
| **Gender** | |
| Male | 754 (51%) |
| Female | 719 (49%) |
| Other | 0 (0%) |
| (Missing) | 0 (0%) |
| **Marital status** | |
| Married | 936 (64%) |
| Separated | 13 (0.9%) |
| Divorced | 64 (4.3%) |
| Widowed | 64 (4.3%) |
| Single, never married | 379 (26%) |
| Domestic partner | 0 (0%) |
| (Missing) | 17 (1.1%) |
| **Employment** | |
| Employed by an employer | 413 (28%) |
| Self-employed | 255 (17%) |
| Retired | 205 (14%) |
| Student | 107 (7.3%) |
| Homemaker | 347 (24%) |
| Unemployed and looking for a job | 87 (5.9%) |
| None of these/Other | 59 (4.0%) |
| (Missing) | 0 (0%) |
| **Religious service attendance** | |
| More than 1/week | 493 (33%) |
| 1/week | 271 (18%) |
| 1-3/month | 174 (12%) |
| A few times a year | 255 (17%) |
| Never | 274 (19%) |
| (Missing) | 6 (0.4%) |
| **Education** | |
| Up to 8 years | 436 (30%) |
| 9-15 years | 711 (48%) |
| 16+ years | 326 (22%) |
| (Missing) | 0 (0%) |
| **Immigration** | |
| Born in this country | 1,415 (96%) |
| Born in another country | 58 (4.0%) |
| (Missing) | 0 (0%) |
| **Religious affiliation** | |
| Christianity | 2 (0.1%) |
| Islam | 1,381 (94%) |
| Buddhism | 1 (<0.1%) |

| Characteristic | N = 1,473[1] |
|---|---|
| Judaism | 1 (<0.1%) |
| Sikhism | 1 (<0.1%) |
| Primal, Animist, or Folk religion | 1 (<0.1%) |
| Some other religion | 1 (<0.1%) |
| No religion/Atheist/Agnostic | 66 (4.5%) |
| (Missing) | 19 (1.3%) |
| **Race/Ethnicity** | |
| Albanian | 8 (0.5%) |
| Arab | 51 (3.5%) |
| Armenian | 1 (<0.1%) |
| Azeri | 9 (0.6%) |
| Bosnian | 5 (0.3%) |
| Circassian | 19 (1.3%) |
| Georgian | 4 (0.3%) |
| Greek | 1 (<0.1%) |
| Kurdish/Zaza | 252 (17%) |
| Laz | 25 (1.7%) |
| Other | 58 (3.9%) |
| Turkish | 1,030 (70%) |
| Uyghur | 1 (<0.1%) |
| (Missing) | 9 (0.6%) |

[1]n (%)

*2.3 Measures*

*2.3.1 Outcome variables*

As shown in Table 2, GFS measured 69 specific outcomes that can be organized into various thematic areas. Within the multidimensional wellbeing thematic area, assessments focus on i) psychological wellbeing, which includes twelve distinct outcomes; ii) social wellbeing, which includes nine distinct outcomes; iii) psychological distress, which includes four distinct outcomes; iv) social distress, which includes two distinct outcomes, v) character and prosocial behaviors, which includes nine distinct outcomes, vi) physical health and health behaviors, which includes six distinct outcomes and finally vii) socioeconomic measures, which includes six distinct outcomes. The religion/spirituality thematic area includes 13 distinct outcomes. In addition, five items of personality and three items of family factors were assessed. These outcomes have been used as part of analyses focusing on a single construct in all 22 GFS countries combined, some of which have already been published as peer-reviewed papers (as indicated by the citations below). Table 2 presents estimated means and proportions across outcome variables for Türkiye. Table S1 represents the pooled average scores for all outcomes across all 22 countries. Marital status was analyzed as a dichotomous variable in two separate ways (ever married vs. not and currently divorced vs. not), yielding two separate variables with the same pre-registration. Additionally, financial and material worry were pre-registered together and yet

analyzed separately. The total number of unique outcome variables used in the analyses was, therefore, 69.

**Table 2.** *Estimated means and proportions across outcome variables for Türkiye*

| Outcome | Mean | Proportions | SE | 95% CI | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Thematic Area 1: Multidimensional Wellbeing** | | | | | |
| *Psychological Wellbeing* | | | | | |
| Happiness | 5.54 | | 0.098 | (5.35, 5.73) | 2.93 |
| Life Satisfaction | 5.19 | | 0.109 | (4.98, 5.40) | 3.24 |
| Life Evaluation Today | 5.18 | | 0.086 | (5.01, 5.35) | 2.56 |
| Life Evaluation Five Years from Now | 6.13 | | 0.105 | (5.93, 6.34) | 2.97 |
| Optimism | 7.65 | | 0.079 | (7.50, 7.81) | 2.50 |
| Freedom | 7.29 | | 0.096 | (7.10, 7.48) | 2.97 |
| Peace | | 0.49 | 0.015 | (0.46, 0.52) | - |
| Balance in Life | | 0.47 | 0.016 | (0.44, 0.50) | - |
| Mastery | | 0.74 | 0.014 | (0.71, 0.77) | - |
| Meaning | 6.13 | | 0.099 | (5.94, 6.33) | 3.06 |
| Purpose | 7.19 | | 0.098 | (7.00, 7.38) | 2.97 |
| Self-Rated Mental Health | 6.27 | | 0.098 | (6.08, 6.47) | 3.00 |
| *Social Wellbeing* | | | | | |
| Subjective Social Connectedness | 6.99 | | 0.085 | (6.83, 7.16) | 2.64 |
| Social Support | 5.47 | | 0.113 | (5.25, 5.69) | 3.49 |
| Intimate Friend | | 0.78 | 0.013 | (0.75, 0.80) | - |
| Government Approval | | 0.41 | 0.016 | (0.38, 0.45) | - |
| Political Voice | | 0.38 | | (0.34, 0.41) | - |
| Belonging | 6.86 | | 0.105 | (6.66, 7.07) | 3.35 |
| City Satisfaction | | 0.72 | 0.014 | (0.70, 0.75) | - |
| Trust | | 0.15 | 0.011 | (0.13, 0.17) | - |
| Community Participation | | 0.21 | 0.012 | (0.18, 0.23) | - |
| *Psychological Distress* | | | | | |
| Traumatic Distress | | 0.52 | 0.016 | (0.49, 0.55) | - |
| Depression | | 0.43 | 0.015 | (0.40, 0.46) | - |
| Anxiety | | 0.42 | 0.016 | (0.39, 0.45) | - |
| Suffering | | 0.60 | 0.016 | (0.57, 0.63) | - |
| *Social Distress* | | | | | |
| Loneliness | 4.55 | | 0.112 | (4.34, 4.77) | 3.45 |

| Outcome | Mean | Proportions | SE | 95% CI | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Discrimination | | 0.29 | | (0.26, 0.32) | - |
| | | | | | |
| *Character & Prosocial Behaviors* | | | | | |
| Promoting Good | 7.69 | | 0.079 | (7.53, 7.84) | 2.37 |
| Delayed Gratification | 7.18 | | 0.086 | (7.01, 7.34) | 2.65 |
| Hope | 7.76 | | 0.089 | (7.59, 7.94) | 2.68 |
| Gratitude | 6.98 | | 0.091 | (6.80, 7.16) | 2.72 |
| Love | 7.89 | | 0.086 | (7.72, 8.05) | 2.62 |
| Forgiveness | | 0.41 | 0.016 | (0.38, 0.44) | - |
| Charitable Giving | | 0.31 | 0.015 | (0.28, 0.34) | - |
| Helping | | 0.61 | 0.016 | (0.58, 0.64) | - |
| Volunteering | | 0.15 | 0.010 | (0.13, 0.17) | - |
| *Physical Health & Health Behaviors* | | | | | |
| Self-Rated Physical Health | 6.70 | | 0.092 | (6.52, 6.88) | 2.72 |
| Health Limitations | | 0.14 | 0.012 | (0.11, 0.16) | - |
| Pain | | 0.53 | 0.016 | (0.50, 0.56) | - |
| Smoking | 9.20 | | 0.359 | (8.49, 9.90) | 11.72 |
| Drinking | 1.07 | | 0.131 | (0.81, 1.33) | 4.31 |
| Exercise | 2.81 | | 0.092 | (2.62, 2.99) | 2.79 |
| *Socioeconomic Outcomes* | | | | | |
| Financial Security | 4.65 | | 0.113 | (4.43, 4.87) | 3.54 |
| Material Security | 5.29 | | 0.119 | (5.05, 5.52) | 3.60 |
| Years of Education | | 0.22 | 0.011 | (0.20, 0.24) | - |
| Employment | | 0.45 | 0.016 | (0.42, 0.48) | - |
| Subjective Financial Wellbeing | | 0.52 | 0.016 | (0.49, 0.55) | - |
| Home ownership | | 0.57 | 0.016 | (0.54, 0.60) | - |
| **Thematic Area 2: Religion/Spirituality** | | | | | |
| Self-Reported Religion/Spirituality | | 0.65 | 0.015 | (0.62, 0.68) | - |
| Religious Service Attendance | | 0.52 | 0.016 | (0.49, 0.55) | - |
| Life after Death Belief | | 0.67 | 0.014 | (0.64, 0.70) | - |
| Religious Experience | | 0.29 | 0.014 | (0.27, 0.32) | - |
| Religious Reading | | 0.38 | 0.016 | (0.35, 0.41) | - |
| Daily Prayer | | 0.69 | 0.014 | (0.66, 0.72) | - |
| Belief in God | | 0.85 | 0.011 | (0.83, 0.87) | - |
| Intrinsic Religiosity | | 0.79 | 0.012 | (0.76, 0.81) | - |

| Outcome | Mean | Proportions | SE | 95% CI | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Religious Comfort | | 0.84 | 0.011 | (0.82, 0.86) | - |
| Loved by God | | 0.86 | 0.013 | (0.83, 0.88) | - |
| Spiritual Punishment | | 0.39 | 0.017 | (0.35, 0.42) | - |
| Religious Criticism | | 0.47 | 0.019 | (0.43, 0.50) | - |
| Evangelism | | 0.70 | 0.017 | (0.67, 0.74) | - |
| **Thematic Area 3: Personality Traits** | | | | | |
| Extraversion | 4.75 | | 0.054 | (4.64, 4.86) | 1.64 |
| Openness to Experience | 4.80 | | 0.050 | (4.70, 4.90) | 1.56 |
| Agreeableness | 5.26 | | 0.043 | (5.18, 5.34) | 1.35 |
| Conscientiousness | 5.65 | | 0.046 | (5.56, 5.74) | 1.41 |
| Neuroticism | 3.13 | | 0.051 | (3.03, 3.23) | 1.54 |
| **Thematic Area 4: Family Factors** | | | | | |
| Ever Married | | 0.74 | 0.012 | (0.72, 0.76) | - |
| Divorced | | 0.04 | 0.006 | (0.03, 0.06) | - |
| Children in home | 1.03 | | 0.042 | (0.95, 1.12) | 1.33 |

*2.3.2 Variables for sociodemographic variation analyses*

There are eight demographic variables: age, gender, marital status, employment, education, religious service attendance, race/ethnicity, and immigration status. Continuous age was classified as 18-24, 25-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, and 80 or older. Gender was assessed as male, female, or other. Marital status was assessed as single/never married, married, separated, divorced, widowed, or domestic partner. Employment was assessed as employed, self-employed, retired, student, homemaker, unemployed, searching, and other. Education was assessed as up to 8 years, 9-15 years, and 16+ years. Religious service attendance was assessed as more than once/week, once/week, one to three times/month, a few times/year, or never. Religious tradition/affiliation with categories of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Sikhism, Baha'i, Jainism, Shinto, Taoism, Confucianism, Primal/Animist/Folk religion, Spiritism, African-Derived, some other religion, or no religion/atheist/agnostic; precise response categories varied by country (Johnson et al., 2024). Racial/ethnic identity was assessed in some, but not all, countries, with response categories varying by country. In the Türkiye data, racial/ethnic identity categories were: Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, Greek, Laz, Circassian, Bosnian, Armenian, Georgian, Uyghur, Albanian, and Azeri. Immigration status was dichotomously assessed with: "Were you born in this country, or not?" For additional details on the assessments, see the COS GFS codebook (Markham et al., 2024) or Crabtree et al. (2021; 2024).

### *2.4 Analyses*

#### *2.4.1 Statistical models*

Analyses were aligned with those conducted globally on each outcome (see linked pre-registrations). The statistical methods for these demographic variation analyses consist of: (1) describing the weighted sample characteristics; (2) overall mean/proportion on each outcome; and (3) subgroup means across demographic characteristics for each outcome. All reported outcome means and proportions were accompanied by complex survey adjusted standard errors and 95% confidence intervals. A global p-value from a significance test of differences in means or proportions across demographic categories was provided, and the reported p-values were Wald-type tests for complex surveys (Lumley & Scott, 2014; Rao & Scott, 1984). The full set of results for all outcomes described previously was reported in at least the online supplement, with focal results presented in text.

#### *2.4.2 Inference criteria*

We presented exact p-values and 95% confidence intervals. P-values correspond to 2-tailed tests for each of our analyses.

#### *2.4.3 Missing data and multiple imputation*

All missing variables were imputed using multivariate imputation by chained equations, with five imputed datasets generated (Sterne et al., 2009; Van Buuren, 2023). The imputation model incorporated the criterion/outcome variable, all demographic characteristics, including race/ethnicity and religious affiliation when available, and sampling weights. The sampling weights were included as a variable in the imputation models to allow for specific variable missingness to be related to the probability of being included in the sample. To account for variations in the assessment of certain variables across countries (e.g., race/ethnicity and religious affiliation), we conducted the imputation process separately for each country. The within-country imputation approach ensured that the imputation model accurately reflects country-specific contexts and assessment methods.

#### *2.4.4 Accounting for complex sampling design*

The GFS used different sampling schemes across countries based on the availability of existing panels and recruitment needs (Ritter et al., 2024). All analyses accounted for the complex survey design components by including weights, primary sampling units, and strata. Additional methodological detail, including accounting for the complex sampling design, is provided elsewhere (Padgett et al., 2025).

## 3. Results

We report the full results in the Supplemental Material in Tables S2-10, examining differences across demographic categories within Türkiye. Given the large number of outcomes across multiple categories, in our main results, we focused on the outcomes for which the p-values comparing mean differences across socioeconomic and demographic groups were less than 0.001, though this threshold is somewhat arbitrary, and full results are again available in the online supplement. However, since the p-values were global, when there were multiple groups for a

demographic factor (e.g., eight different age groups), they did not help identify the exact groups that yielded significant differences. To address this, we identified the two groups that revealed the largest differences in each outcome, provided that their confidence intervals did not overlap. These often corresponded to groups that received the highest or lowest scores for each outcome, which enabled us to report the trends for groups that received consistently the highest and lowest scores. When the average means/proportions were equal across two categories, we reported the category with the narrower confidence interval. In cases where the confidence intervals were equal, we reported both categories and noted their equal values in text.

### *3.1 Sociodemographic factors*

#### *3.1.1 Age*

In age categories, the most consistent results were found for the youngest age groups (18-24), who demonstrated generally the least favorable patterns in terms of wellbeing, and those at the 50+ age groups, who generally showed the most favorable patterns. Individuals aged 18-24 had the lowest scores for optimism, freedom, government approval, belonging, city satisfaction, and the highest scores for anxiety and loneliness, although they had the highest life evaluation five years from now. In contrast, the 50+ age groups received the highest scores for freedom, optimism, government approval, belonging, city satisfaction, housing, and frequency of exercise, and the lowest scores for anxiety, loneliness, religious experience, and frequency of drinking, employment, and education. In terms of personality differences, the 18-24 age group had the highest scores for neuroticism and conscientiousness, while the 50+ age groups received the lowest scores for these personality outcomes. Marriage and divorce rates were also the highest among the 50+ age groups and lowest among the 18-24 age group. Full results are reported in Table S2.

#### *3.1.2 Gender*

For gender, scores on optimism, intimate friends, and city satisfaction were higher for women compared to men, while community participation was lower. Looking at health, women generally rated their health lower than men but reported lower rates of smoking and drinking. Employment was significantly lower among women. Women reported higher scores in religious reading, prayer-meditation, being loved by God, and religious comfort, and lower scores for spiritual punishment. Agreeableness was lower among women compared to men, and the marriage rate was higher. Full results are reported in Table S3.

#### *3.1.3 Marital status*

In terms of marital status, those who are widowed often had some of the highest and lowest scores. They had the lowest levels of community participation, education, and employment, and the highest levels of pain. However, they also reported the least discrimination, the lowest frequency of smoking, and the highest city satisfaction. Their religious experience was the lowest, while prayer-meditation and religious service attendance were the highest. Those in domestic partnership had the lowest scores for city satisfaction and discrimination, and the highest community participation and religious experience (same score as those who are single). Religious experience and education were the highest among those who identified as single and those in a

domestic partnership. The divorced group had the highest rates of smoking, employment, and the lowest prayer-meditation, religious service attendance, and the fewest children. Married people had the highest number of children. Full results are reported in Table S4.

*3.1.4 Race & ethnicity*

Approximately 70% of the sample identified racially/ethnically as Turkish adults, followed by Kurds (17%) and Arabs (3.5%). The sample sizes for other categories were too small to make reliable comparisons. As compared to Kurdish/Zaza, the wellbeing scores for the Turkish group were consistently higher, particularly for happiness, life satisfaction, peace, meaning, social support, material security, education, financial wellbeing, and housing, while traumatic distress, loneliness, and pain were lower among the Turkish group. Turkish also scored lower in religious service attendance and intrinsic religiosity. As compared to Kurds/Zaza, Arabs had higher scores for life balance and intrinsic religiosity, although their traumatic distress was also higher. As compared to Turkish, Arab's material security and education were lower. Arabs had the highest number of children, and Turks had the lowest. The Kurdish group had the least favorable scores on most outcomes, including happiness, life balance, meaning, financial wellbeing, housing, social support, and the highest scores for pain and loneliness. Religious service attendance was the highest among Kurds. Full results are reported in Table S5.

*3.1.5 Employment*

Looking at employment categories, students reported the highest levels of life evaluation five years from now, community participation, and volunteering, but also the lowest levels of city satisfaction. Students had the lowest marriage rates and scored the lowest on most religiosity measures. Retirees reported the highest levels of mental health, city satisfaction, and charitable giving, but the lowest frequency of volunteering and life evaluation five years from now. They were most likely to be divorced and had the fewest children. The employed reported the highest levels of education and commitment to promoting good in the world. The unemployed reported the lowest levels of trust and the highest levels of loneliness. Homemakers showed a mixed profile, having the lowest scores on community participation, education, and the lowest engagement in smoking and drinking. Homemakers scored the highest on most measures of religiosity/ spirituality and were most likely to be married and have children, and the least likely to be divorced (on par with students). The self-employed had the lowest scores on loneliness and intrinsic religiosity, the highest scores on helping, and the highest rates of smoking and drinking. Personality outcomes showed mixed results. Full results are reported in Table S6.

*3.1.6 Education*

In the results on education, the groups that differed more consistently were those with the most education (16+ years) and those with up to only 8 years of education. Those with the most education (16+ years) reported the greatest scores on life balance, social support, physical health, employment, charitable giving, helping, and volunteering, as well as the least amount of traumatic distress, health limitations, and pain. These groups also had the lowest government approval, political voice, and gratitude, as well as the highest levels of drinking. They scored the lowest across most religion/spirituality measures and had the fewest number of children. Those

with up to 8 years of education had the lowest scores on life balance and social support, charitable giving, helping, volunteering, and physical health, and the highest rates of health limitations, pain, and traumatic distress; they also had highest scores on government approval, political voice, city satisfaction, gratitude, and forgiveness, and lowest drinking frequency and employment rate. This group also scored the highest on most religion/spirituality outcomes, were more likely to be married, and had more children. These two groups also differed significantly in terms of personality; those with 16+ years of education reported the lowest extraversion and openness to experience, and those with up to 8 years of education reported the highest. Agreeableness was the lowest among those with up to 8 years of education. Full results are reported in Table S7.

*3.1.7 Religious service attendance*

In the results on religious service attendance, the groups that differed more consistently were those who reported attending religious service more than once a week (the most frequent attenders) and those who reported never attending religious service or attending a few times a year. Individuals who attended religious services weekly or more reported the highest scores for happiness, life satisfaction, sense of meaning and purpose in life, self-rated mental health, city satisfaction, trust, community participation, financial and material security, and exercise frequency, and the lowest scores on drinking. They also scored the highest on most religion/spirituality measures. Those who never attended religious service reported the lowest life evaluation, freedom, meaning and purpose in life, self-rated mental health, government approval, political voice, belonging, trust, hope, and the highest levels of education. They scored the lowest on most religion/spirituality outcomes. In terms of religious affiliation, most categories were too small to compare with Islam, but comparisons with "no religion/atheist/agnostic" revealed a generally lower wellbeing profile for the latter, although the sample size for this category was relatively small ($n$ = 66). Full results are reported in Table S8 for religious affiliation and S9 for religious service attendance.

*3.1.8 Immigration status*

Immigration status was broken into two categories: born in Türkiye or not born in Türkiye. Hope was the only indicator that yielded a statistically significant p-value (<.001), with immigrants reporting higher hope compared to those born in Türkiye. Note that only 58 immigrants were in the sample of those who were not born in Türkiye, compared to the 1,415 individuals within the sample who were born in Türkiye. Full results are reported in Table S10.

*3.2 International comparisons: Türkiye vs. all 22 countries combined*

Next, we discuss comparisons of the estimated means and proportions of outcome variables for Türkiye (see Table 2) with the pooled estimates for all countries in the GFS dataset combined (see Table S1). We only report differences when the 95% confidence intervals for outcomes in each group (Türkiye vs. all countries in GFS) were not overlapping. Among the 69 variables analyzed, estimates for Türkiye differed from the pooled estimates on 40 variables. Looking at multidimensional wellbeing, in 30 outcomes, Türkiye's wellbeing scores were less favorable. These included lower psychological wellbeing, as measured by happiness, life satisfaction, life evaluations now and five years from now, freedom, peace, balance in life, meaning, and self-rated

mental health. Social wellbeing was also lower in Türkiye, as revealed by lower scores for subjective social connectedness, social support, intimate friend, political voice, belonging, city satisfaction, and trust. Psychological distress was higher, since Türkiye's scores on traumatic distress, depression, anxiety, suffering, and loneliness were all greater than the average scores for the GFS countries. In terms of character and prosocial behaviors, too, scores on gratitude, forgiveness, and volunteering were lower in Türkiye. On the health outcomes, Türkiye scored lower on self-rated physical health and reported a markedly higher smoking rate, although self-reported health limitations were lower in Türkiye. In socioeconomic outcomes, financial security, employment, subjective financial wellbeing, and home ownership were all lower in the Türkiye sample. We also observed some differences in personality, with greater extraversion in Türkiye compared to the full sample. The Türkiye sample also had higher marriage rates and greater scores on four religion/spirituality outcomes, including religious service attendance, life after death belief, daily prayer-meditation frequency, and religious criticism.

## 4. Discussion

The current paper provides some of the most comprehensive descriptive data on flourishing in the context of Türkiye. The sample was intended to be representative of the nation, reflecting the relatively younger, predominantly Muslim, and religious population of Türkiye. Most individuals in the sample were married, with a large homemaker category. The ethnic diversity of the country was also somewhat representative, with the majority being Turkish and about eleven other ethnicities represented in the data. Some concerns regarding the representativeness of the sample are discussed in the limitations section below.

Taking advantage of the large-scale data collection efforts enabled by the GFS, we were able to simultaneously study 69 wellbeing outcomes that capture a wide range of wellbeing indicators in Türkiye. Using this rich assessment, our paper revealed differences in wellbeing between various sociodemographic groups in the country and provided insights into the wellbeing of Türkiye in comparison to all countries in the GFS combined.

### *4.1 Sociodemographic comparisons*

The results reveal that Turkish youth may be experiencing a 'crisis of wellbeing' since their wellbeing demonstrated low scores across a large number of outcomes measured in the GFS, especially in comparison to those at 50+ ages. These trends are consistent with young people's mental health crisis around the world and could be linked to the influences of social media use, global-societal changes, and economic pressures (Chen et al., 2022; McGorry et al., 2025; VanderWeele et al., 2025c). These findings could also be attributed to the academic pressures and social transitions often experienced by this segment of the population (Weber et al., 2022). A notable finding was young people's generally lower social wellbeing, as reflected in aspects such as lower sense of freedom, belonging, city satisfaction, and government approval. These trends may suggest a growing sociopolitical dissent among educated young demographic groups. These results may also shed light on the country's current challenges with brain drain (TurkStat, 2023), highlighting the importance of improving the wellbeing of young people in Türkiye.

Given the longstanding issues with equitable gender participation in economic and public life in Türkiye, as well as threats to the health and survival of women (United Nations, 2025),

wellbeing differences between males and females were of particular significance. Prior research has yielded mixed findings for gender differences in wellbeing in Türkiye, with some studies showing lower wellbeing among women (Kose, 2020; Karaman, 2021; Tirgil & Aygün, 2021), others reporting greater wellbeing among women (Eren & Aşıcı, 2017, TurkStat, 2022), or finding no gender differences (Duvar et al., 2025). Our results did not reveal differences between men and women across most psychological wellbeing outcomes. A notable pattern was that women seemed more engaged in private life, with more intimate friends and personal religious practice. However, their public life participation was lower, as indicated by lower community participation and employment, which may be an indicator of the traditional gender norms within society (e.g., women's responsibilities for homemaking). One major difference in our data was that women experienced greater optimism (and religiosity) than men, which could be a source of wellbeing in the context of adversity (Conversano et al., 2010). Women's low scores on agreeableness could also provide a sense of resilience (Oshio et al., 2018). Prior research has found that regional variation in gender equality may explain gender gaps in wellbeing in Türkiye (Karaman, 2021). However, since regional information was not available in the GFS data collection, we were unable to explore this further. Future studies could examine what contextual (e.g., geographical region) or socioeconomic factors (e.g., income, education) reduce gender gaps in wellbeing in Türkiye. Finally, two patterns were notable for men, the first of which indicated a high engagement in drinking and smoking, which could be linked to the more active social life among men in Türkiye (Johnson & Jennison, 1992). Second, men consistently reported a less comforting relationship with religion/spirituality, the reasons for which could be examined in future studies.

Looking at marital status, a category of interest was the married compared to other groups since marriage is a deeply rooted value and norm endorsed by the Islamic culture within Türkiye, which is also reflected in the higher proportion of married individuals in the country compared to the pooled GFS sample. In terms of marital status, individuals who are married (64% of the sample) did not emerge with highest scores in most psychological wellbeing outcomes, which stands in contrast to the general evidence that marital status is positively related to psychological wellbeing (Marks & Lambert, 1998; VanderWeele, 2017; Chen et al., 2023), including in Türkiye (Sibel, 2008; Eren & Aşıcı, 2017; Tirgil & Aygün, 2021). Future studies may explore the reasons underlying this pattern, for instance, by examining the role of economic pressures in affecting the wellbeing of married couples. Given the gender disparities in lifestyles in Türkiye, an important future direction could also be to examine how marital status interacts with gender in shaping wellbeing outcomes.

In terms of race/ethnicity, we found a consistent wellbeing gap between Turks and Kurds, such that Kurdish people's wellbeing was lower across most wellbeing outcomes. This finding could reflect potential disparities in socioeconomic opportunities between the two groups and should be given further attention in future studies. Although the sample size was small, some wellbeing outcomes among Arabs tended to be greater than those of the Kurds, despite their higher traumatic distress, which may be capturing immigrant groups from war-torn countries such as Syria. The findings observed in this study may be reflective of the opportunities that immigrant groups found within the context of Türkiye, which is also reflected in greater hope ratings among those not born in Türkiye.

Looking at employment categories, Türkiye data showed some favorable wellbeing outcomes for the employed, which contrasted with some of the low wellbeing scores among the unemployed. These findings are consistent with prior research (Paul & Moser, 2009), especially in the Türkiye context (Sibel, 2008; Eren & Aşıcı, 2017). Given that the unemployment rate in Türkiye is twice the OECD average (TurkStat, 2024), unemployment constitutes a serious threat to population wellbeing. The self-employed, on the other hand, had an active social life, yet their high frequency of smoking and drinking could be related to the relatively high levels of economic precarity and stress in their jobs (Çarkıt, 2024). Additionally, retirees showed some favorable wellbeing outcomes, which could be attributed to government benefits, such as universal healthcare, as well as strong intergenerational/family ties that may provide social support for retirees. Research shows that retirement may boost wellbeing by fostering greater engagement with social life, and that this may be especially the case for those who transition from lower quality jobs (Yemiscigil et al., 2021). These findings may be relevant for retirees in Türkiye. It is surprising that retirees had higher wellbeing scores despite the high inflation rates at the time of data collection, which reduced the real value of retirement pensions, warranting further exploration of how the wealth status of retirees interacts with their wellbeing. Finally, homemakers, who are more likely to be female in Türkiye, reported the least engagement with risky health behaviors such as smoking and drinking; yet, their community participation was low, consistent with our gender results, and highlighting the importance of including women in public life.

The results for education revealed another striking gap, with the most educated (16+ years) reporting a more favorable profile on many personal wellbeing outcomes (high life balance, physical health, employment, low traumatic distress and pain), although they reported the lowest levels of satisfaction with the social-political context. Perhaps relatedly, this group also engaged more in prosocial activities to help their context (e.g., charitable giving, helping, volunteering). Those with up to 8 years of education showed the opposite profile on these measures. These two groups also differed from one another with respect to religion/spirituality, with the most educated scoring lowest on most outcomes within this category and the least educated scoring the highest. This pattern of findings may reflect a more critical perspective of the social-economic system among those who have completed more formal education (Lincoln & Kearney, 2019). The higher prosocial engagement also aligns with active citizenship as an outcome of education (Rüber & Janmaat, 2020). In the specific Türkiye context, these findings also reflect the educational gradient in explaining the growing dissent with the social-political environment and policies.

Analyses of religious service attendance revealed a mostly consistent pattern, with most wellbeing outcomes higher among those who attend services more frequently. These results are consistent with previous findings focused on North American and Western European samples (Balboni et al., 2022; VanderWeele, 2017). In the context of Türkiye, some of these wellbeing impacts may also underscore the benefits of engaging in religious practices in a country where religiosity and religious participation are the norm. It would be interesting for future research to explore whether religious participation is also positively linked to wellbeing among those who identify with minority religions in the context of Türkiye (e.g., Christians, Jews).

*4.2 International comparisons*

Consistent with prior research (OECD 2023, World Happiness Report, 2025), we observed that Türkiye scored lower across most multidimensional wellbeing outcomes compared to pooled estimates for all 22 GFS countries combined, indicating a significant challenge in achieving wellbeing compared to other regions represented in the GFS data, in terms of psychological, social, health, and socioeconomic outcomes. Note that some of these scores may be influenced by the major earthquake that occurred in Türkiye in February 2023, only a few months before the data collection for GFS started (4/15/23 – 1/15/24). Indeed, the psychological impact of traumatic events, such as earthquakes, can further exacerbate mental health issues, particularly among vulnerable groups (Kaplan et al., 2024). These results may also reflect broader patterns of socioeconomic development, which is generally lower in Türkiye compared to many of the countries represented in GFS. For instance, they could be driven by the higher rates of unemployment in Türkiye; unemployment was linked to lower levels of wellbeing in our analyses. Indeed, one study on community mental health shows that factors such as unemployment, as well as access to mental health services, can explain the differences in psychological wellbeing in Türkiye vs. Europe (Karabulut et al., 2024). Sociopolitical tensions in Türkiye may also have undermined social cohesion (Dhabhai, 2025). Indeed, Türkiye respondents reported lower social wellbeing compared to the GFS means, suggesting that social integration and support may be undermined by the political and cultural tensions within the country (Dhabhai, 2025). Türkiye's higher loneliness ratings are particularly surprising, given its collectivistic and relational culture, and greater extraversion scores as revealed by our results. Perhaps, expectations from social relationships are high in the Türkiye context, or the country's values have been shifting towards individualistic lifestyles along with globalization trends. It is also possible that the sociopolitical tensions that threaten social cohesion have been reflected in intimate relationships that shape social life.

With religiosity as the norm, it is not surprising that Türkiye scored higher on four religiosity/spirituality outcomes, although its lower ratings on character outcomes for gratitude, forgiveness, and volunteering are surprising given the emphasis on these virtues and charity in Islam. Note that commitment to promoting good was higher among the employed within Türkiye, which could highlight the role of organizational/occupational context in providing opportunities for social contribution. It is possible that volunteering, as a form of prosocial behavior directed at out-group members, may be less relevant or common for this cultural context compared to behaviors such as helping, which can arise more spontaneously and are more often directed toward ingroup members (Aydinli et al., 2013). Some health behaviors, such as high rates of smoking, are also rooted in cultural norms and traditions (Bolat & Beylik, 2024) and present unique risk factors for health. Similarly, high marriage rates in Türkiye align with cultural and societal norms, although willingness to have children has reduced significantly in recent years, perhaps in part due to economic constraints. The economic costs of having children may have undermined the psychological benefits of it, pointing to changing family dynamics (Çoksan et al., 2024; Kagitcibasi & Ataca, 2005). These trends may pose unique challenges to the future economy and social life within Türkiye.

To present additional supportive evidence, we also compared the ranking of Türkiye in the full country list based on the average scores of wellbeing. In these results, Türkiye had the lowest scores in the full country dataset in terms of happiness, life satisfaction, peace, and forgiveness,

the second lowest scores in future life evaluation, balance in life, meaning, self-rated mental health, social relationship quality, social support, and belonging. Türkiye also had the highest scores in terms of suffering, loneliness, and the second-highest scores for traumatic distress. Some of these results are consistent with prior publications that use GFS data (Cowden et al., 2025b, 2025c). Türkiye ranks somewhat higher in exercise (6th), education (10th), and several religion/spirituality indicators (e.g., 4th in life after death belief), and received the 2nd lowest scores for health limitations. Note that the dataset generally covers some of the most socially and economically developed nations of the world, which is worth considering when interpreting these rankings.

### *4.3 Limitations*

Given the comprehensive data provided by the GFS, the current research reveals many directions for future research, but it also has several limitations. First, our analysis is based on cross-sectional data, which cannot be used to make inferences about cause-and-effect. Future studies can provide more nuanced analyses that allow some causal inference to be made using longitudinal data, which is planned to be collected as part of GFS.

A second limitation was related to the representativeness of the sample. Certain groups did not have an adequate number of respondents in the data, which limits our ability to draw reliable conclusions for these groups from the analyses, especially as Türkiye had the smallest sample size of the countries in the GFS and a relatively low response rate. First, most ethnic minorities, other than the Kurdish and Arabs, were too small to enter the analysis. Second, the GFS data for Türkiye did not include any respondents who identify as nonbinary gender. For comparison, the percentage of nonbinary gender status reported in all GFS countries was 0.3%. This could be due to cultural norms about nonconforming gender identities in the Türkiye context, preventing people from reporting their nonbinary gender. Reflecting this societal norm, the recent judicial reform package in early 2025 criminalizes public encouragement or behavior that contradicts biological sex. As a result, our analyses do not document the lived experience of those who identify as nonbinary in Türkiye. Third, the 80+ age category showed strikingly different patterns but consisted of only 18 adults, which limits the precision of estimates for this group. Fourth, religious affiliation was not comparable across categories, since 94% of the sample was Muslim, and other categories constituted less than 0.1% of the sample (with mostly one or two people in each category). Fifth, the immigrant sample was also relatively small (4%, 58 individuals). Additionally, both unemployment and self-employment rates are lower in the GFS data's Türkiye sample (5.9% and 17% respectively) compared to the national statistics in 2024 (8.4% and 28%). Relatedly, according to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, about 3.7% of the residents of Türkiye are foreign-born, which matches the current sample (4%); however, it is generally acknowledged that these statistics often understate the reality. Finally, a critical gap in the dataset was that a regional breakdown was not available. In the Türkiye context, we expect significant differences based on region due to underlying socioeconomic differences (Elburz et al., 2022).

Another limitation of self-reported wellbeing data, which also applies to the current study, is that most wellbeing measures are developed in Western, English-speaking countries and then translated to non-Western contexts, so it is possible that certain constructs were not interpreted/understood in the expected ways (Cowden et al., 2025a). Although cognitive interviews and pilot testing were conducted in Türkiye before the formal full Turkish sample

data collection, this may not address all challenges when translating survey items (Johnson et al., 2023). For example, some of the untranslatable words of wellbeing (Lomas, 2016) exist in the Turkish language (e.g., keyif), but they were not captured in the current wellbeing measures. Or the concept of love, for instance, is expressed in two distinct words/concepts (i.e., sevgi, aşk). Furthermore, there might be cultural variation in reporting wellbeing, for instance, in how numbers are interpreted in the survey. For example, it is possible that Türkiye respondents are more comfortable reporting negative experiences, which may affect the comparability of their scores with those of other nations. Responses could also be impacted by memory bias due to major events, such as recent earthquakes in Türkiye. While the current analysis focuses on comparisons of population averages between countries, future studies can also examine cross-country differences in the wellbeing of specific groups (e.g., the most impoverished or the richest) to understand country-level differences in wellbeing. These studies can also compare the wellbeing of nations in times of crisis (e.g., pandemics, war).

Finally, given the cross-sectional data, it is difficult to determine the reasons for group differences, as well as any transient trends that can be attributed to recent events. Note that some of these outcomes could be linked to the childhood environment in which residents grow up in, which can significantly shape wellbeing in adulthood as shown in studies using the GFS data (Lomas et al, 2025c, Lomas et al, 2025d, Macchia et al., 2025), suggesting that rather than recent events, wellbeing outcomes could also be shaped by historical events that the residents of Türkiye have experienced. Longitudinal studies or repeated cross-sectional assessments can shed light on some of these considerations. Methodologically, in addition to quantitative research efforts, a mixed-methods approach can enrich the data by providing qualitative explorations of the needs of particular groups within Türkiye, which can support the implementation of tailored policies and interventions aimed at enhancing flourishing.

### *4.4 Conclusion*

Assessments of flourishing provide a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing, shedding light on what contributes to a good life for individuals and the broader context in which they live. As we work towards building a robust science of flourishing that uncovers universal principles as well as culturally specific insights, it becomes particularly important to understand how well people are doing in non-Western and socioeconomically developing areas of the world that are not often represented in prior research (Wong & Cowden, 2022). The current research addresses this knowledge gap by presenting a comprehensive assessment of flourishing in Türkiye, covering 69 indicators, including cross-national comparisons across 22 countries. As an economically developing country that has relatively recently gone through rapid modernization, with experiences of frequent socioeconomic and environmental crises, and a rich cultural heritage, Türkiye presents a unique context to understand the determinants and correlates of wellbeing. Our findings highlight enduring divides in sociocultural norms and lifestyles that have historically shaped the country. They also reveal a crisis of wellbeing among the youth who are increasingly unsatisfied with the societal context – a pattern mirrored in the groups with higher education – while older adults and those with high religious service attendance enjoy higher wellbeing. Our results also highlight that Türkiye had some of the lowest wellbeing scores compared to the full cross-country sample in Wave 1 of the GFS, further pointing to the importance of gaining a deeper understanding of Türkiye's overall wellbeing and the need to

identify policies and practices that can enhance flourishing across all sociodemographic groups. Our research reveals many insights that warrant further exploration in future studies, including the need to uncover the factors tied to lower wellbeing in Türkiye when compared to other countries, and to explore regional variation in wellbeing outcomes, intersectional patterns across sociodemographic factors (e.g., women with high vs. low education, divorced men), and the wellbeing of ethnic/religious minorities (e.g., Armenians, Jews, Christians). The multidimensional insights gained from this study can help shape policies that foster inclusive and sustainable wellbeing for all in the country.

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Yemiscigil: Conceptualization, Analysis, Writing - Review & editing. Baskurt: Conceptualization, Analysis, Writing - Review & editing. Asici: Analysis, Writing - Review & editing. Case: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & editing. Cowden: Writing - Review & editing. Chen: Writing-Review & editing. Lomas: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & editing. Padgett: Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Visualization, Writing - Review & editing. Johnson: Conceptualization, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Supervision, Writing - Review & editing. VanderWeele: Conceptualization, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Supervision, Writing - Review & editing.

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**Conflict of interest statement**

Tyler J. VanderWeele reports consulting fees from Gloo Inc., along with shared revenue received by Harvard University in its license agreement with Gloo Inc. according to the University IP policy. Other authors declare no competing interests.

**Ethical approval**

This project was ruled exempt by the Baylor University Institutional Review Board (#1841317-2). All personally identifiable information was removed from the data used in this study by Gallup Inc. Institutional Review Board approval for all data collection activities was obtained by Gallup Inc.

**AI statement**

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used AI-assisted copy editing to enhance readability and to ensure the text is free of grammatical and spelling errors. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the work.

**Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this article are openly available on the Open Science Framework and in the Supplementary Materials. The specific dataset used was Wave 1 non-sensitive global data available from February 2024 to March 2026 via preregistration and publicly available thereafter (https://www.cos.io/gfs-access-data).

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