

## PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN TURKIYE ON MAY 14, 2023 MALATYA RESULTS ANALYSIS

### ELEIÇÕES PRESIDENCIAIS NA TURQUIA EM 14 DE MAIO DE 2023 ANÁLISE DOS RESULTADOS DE MALATYA

Article received on: 9/2/2025

Article accepted on: 12/1/2025

**Hasan Yilmaz\***

Inonu University, Malatya, Turkiye

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9212-8084>

[hyilmaz@inonu.edu.tr](mailto:hyilmaz@inonu.edu.tr)

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

#### Abstract

There have been 22 presidential elections in Turkiye. The 2023 presidential elections are a historic moment in Turkish political life. Issues such as the election going to a second round, the decisive role of coalition politics, and the diversification of voter behavior have made the election significant. The 2023 presidential elections in Turkiye differed from previous presidential elections. Turkish citizens and voters participated in the 22nd presidential election in the history of the Republic and elected Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the current 12th President. In the second round held on May 28, 2023, Erdogan received 52.18% of the vote and won the election, while Kilicdaroglu received 47.82%. In this study, a mixed research method was preferred by using both qualitative and quantitative research methods together. The transfer of election results with numerical data shows that it is largely quantitative. In addition, the interpretation and description of the existing results in tables shows that it is qualitative. Secondary data analysis was used as the data collection technique. New tables and graphs were created by analyzing the actual data from official administrations. This made it possible to look at the election results from different angles using data obtained from reliable sources.

**Keywords:** President. Presidential Elections. Malatya. Election.

#### Resumo

Já foram realizadas 22 eleições presidenciais na Turquia. As eleições presidenciais de 2023 são um momento histórico na vida política turca. Questões como a realização de um segundo turno, o papel decisivo da política de coalizões e a diversificação do comportamento dos eleitores tornaram a eleição significativa. As eleições presidenciais de 2023 na Turquia diferiram das eleições presidenciais anteriores. Os cidadãos e eleitores turcos participaram da 22ª eleição presidencial na história da República e elegeram Recep Tayyip Erdogan, o atual 12º presidente. No segundo turno, realizado em 28 de maio de 2023, Erdogan recebeu 52,18% dos votos e venceu a eleição, enquanto Kilicdaroglu recebeu 47,82%. Neste estudo, foi preferido um método de pesquisa misto, utilizando métodos de pesquisa qualitativos e quantitativos em conjunto. A transferência dos resultados eleitorais com dados numéricos mostra que é em grande parte quantitativa. Além disso, a interpretação e descrição dos resultados existentes nas tabelas mostra que é qualitativa. A análise de dados secundários foi utilizada como técnica de coleta de dados. Novas tabelas e gráficos foram criados através da análise dos dados reais das administrações oficiais. Isso permitiu analisar os resultados eleitorais sob diferentes ângulos, utilizando dados obtidos de fontes confiáveis.

**Palavras-chave:** Presidente. Eleições Presidenciais. Malatya. Eleição.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

The presidential elections held in Turkiye on May 14, 2023, are considered one of the most critical democratic processes in the history of the Republic. This election attracted attention both for being the first to go to a second round, and for its high voter turnout and intense political competition. In these elections, where the Presidential Government System was tested for the second time, the fact that the ruling and opposition blocs entered the election with extensive alliances created a significant turning point in Turkish politics in terms of polarization and societal preferences. Throughout the election process, the campaigns of the parties and candidates generated debates on a very wide range of issues, from the economic crisis to foreign policy, from social unrest to identity politics. Therefore, the elections were seen not only as a possibility of a change of power, but also as a critical juncture for the future of Turkiye's political system.

The election results across the country reflected different political tendencies and regional vote distributions, with the differences between candidates in some provinces being significantly higher than the national average. Malatya is one of these provinces. Malatya, with its historically conservative-nationalist identity and the political and social atmosphere that emerged after the major earthquake of 2023, constitutes a special case study that needs to be examined in order to understand the course of the elections. The role of the state and central government in the post-earthquake period influenced voter behavior; the steps taken in terms of aid, reconstruction, and social solidarity guided voting preferences. In this context, Malatya voters exhibited a different profile from the Turkish average, not only in terms of general political leanings but also due to the impact of the extraordinary circumstances they experienced.

In the first round of the May 14, 2023 elections, Recep Tayyip Erdogan received 69.39% of the vote in Malatya, while Kemal Kilicdaroglu received 27.11%. While Erdogan's vote share was 49.52% nationwide, it was approximately 20 points higher in Malatya. This result reveals that Malatya is a stronghold for Erdogan. Erdogan's frequent visits to the earthquake-stricken region during the election campaign, the messages of support given to the people of the region, and the aid provided played a decisive role in the choices of Malatya voters. In the second round on May 28, Erdogan increased his vote share to 71.96%, further widening the gap. Kilicdaroglu, on the other hand, only managed

a limited increase. This picture shows that the preferences of Malatya voters differ from the national average and that conservative tendencies remain strong. These results reveal that several factors must be considered to understand voter behavior. Firstly, political affiliations and long-standing party loyalties are strong in Malatya. Voters prioritize their identity affiliations over short-term economic problems and gravitate towards the current government in their search for stability. Secondly, the state's increased visibility in the region after the earthquake has boosted feelings of security both psychologically and socially. Therefore, voters have come to believe that a choice aligned with the state will improve their living conditions. Thirdly, the role of alliances must be considered. The People's Alliance's strong organizational structure and candidate profiles in Malatya have made it easier for voters to gravitate towards Erdogan.

## 2 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN TURKIYE

In the history of the Republic of Turkiye, founded on October 29, 1923, 12 Presidents have served. A total of 23 presidential elections have been held, with results obtained in 22 of them. The Grand National Assembly of Turkiye was unable to hold the election in 1980, and the military coup of September 12, 1980, took place, after which Kenan Evren became President. The table below shows the Presidents who have served in Turkiye and their terms of office:

**Table 1**

*Presidents of the Republic of Turkiye*

| <i>No</i> | <i>Presidential</i>   | <i>Years of service</i> |
|-----------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1         | Mustafa Kemal Atatürk | 1923 – 1938             |
| 2         | Ismet İnönü           | 1938 – 1950             |
| 3         | Celal Bayar           | 1950 – 1960             |
| 4         | Cemal Gürsel          | 1960 – 1966             |
| 5         | Cevdet Sunay          | 1966 – 1973             |
| 6         | Fahri Korutürk        | 1973 – 1980             |
| 7         | Kenan Evren           | 1982 – 1989             |
| 8         | Turgut Özal           | 1989 – 1993             |
| 9         | Süleyman Demirel      | 1993 – 2000             |
| 10        | Ahmet Necdet Sezer    | 2000 – 2007             |
| 11        | Abdullah Gül          | 2007 – 2014             |
| 12        | Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  | 2014 – ...              |

In 1923, Atatürk was elected the first President by the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM). He won the elections in 1927, 1931, and 1935, serving four consecutive terms as President (TCCB, 2025). Atatürk was elected President by winning all the votes in elections where he was the sole candidate. Following Atatürk's death in 1938, İsmet İnönü, a Republican People's Party Member (CHP) of Parliament from Malatya, was elected President by the Assembly. Elections were held in 1939 and 1943, and İnönü, as the sole candidate, was elected. In 1946, for the first time, more than one presidential candidate participated in the election. İsmet İnönü won the election against Fevzi Çakmak and Yusuf Kemal Tengirsenk, becoming the second President in the 8th election of the TBMM. In 1950, Celal Bayar, the Democratic Party (DP) candidate, won a large majority against İsmet İnönü and became the 3rd President of the Republic of Türkiye (TBMM, 1950). Celal Bayar served three consecutive terms as President. Cemal Gürsel, who assumed the presidency after the 1960 coup, continued in his role and became President in the 1961 elections. Cevdet Sunay served in 1966, and Fahri Korutürk in 1973.

The 1980 presidential election process lasted more than five months and ultimately did not yield a result. The elections saw intense competition between Muhsin Batur and Saadettin Bilgic, the candidates of the CHP and AP parties, respectively. Ultimately, Bilgic withdrew from the race, leaving Faik Turun and Muhsin Batur as the sole candidates. In the 99th round of elections, Batur resigned from his senatorial post, leaving Faik Turun as the sole candidate. However, due to the inability to hold joint meetings of the Senate and the Grand National Assembly of the Republic, elections could not be held (AA, 2018). Consequently, İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil, the President of the Senate, acted as interim President until the September 12, 1980 coup (Yıldız and Edi, 2021).

Kenan Evren, who assumed the Presidency after the 1980 coup, began his term as President in 1982 following the referendum on the 1982 Constitution, in accordance with Article first of the Provisional Articles of the Constitution (Sunay, 2010). In 1989, Turgut Özal won the election and became Türkiye's 8th President. Süleyman Demirel was elected President in 1993, and Ahmet Necdet Sezer in 2000. The 2007 presidential election was again very different. In the process known in Turkish political history as the "367 Crisis," an early general election and referendum were held. The issue of the quorum

for the TBMM was clarified in the referendum. Following the election, AK Party candidate Abdullah Gul became the 11th President.

With the end of Abdullah Gul's term, the Turkish people elected their president for the first time. Recep Tayyip Erdogan became the first president elected directly by popular vote on August 10, 2014. On April 16, 2017, a referendum was held to amend the Constitution, transitioning to a Presidential Government System. In June 2018, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the candidate of the People's Alliance, was elected president as the first president under the new system. In May 2023, a first occurred in the presidential election. The first round of voting by popular vote resulted in no winner, and the election went to a second round. In the second round of elections, Recep Tayyip Erdogan won the right to continue as President.

## 2.1 2023 presidential election results in Turkiye

The 2023 Presidential elections in Turkiye witnessed several firsts. For the first time in elections held by popular vote, the election went to a second round. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who received the majority of votes in the second round, was elected as the 12th President. Voter turnout data for Turkiye as a whole is provided below. The table is based on statistical data obtained from the Supreme Election Council (YSK), the authority responsible for conducting elections in Turkiye.

**Table 2**

*Nationwide Election Voter Turnout Statistics in Turkiye (2018-2023)*

|               | <i>Second Round</i> |                              | <i>First Round</i> |                              | <i>2018</i>  |                              |
|---------------|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
|               | <i>Ratio</i>        | <i>Number of valid votes</i> | <i>Ratio</i>       | <i>Number of valid votes</i> | <i>Ratio</i> | <i>Number of valid votes</i> |
| Domestic      | 85,72               | 51.418.556                   | 88,92              | 52.972.934                   | 86,24        | 50.068.627                   |
| International | 52,04               | 1.774.459                    | 53,81              | 1.839.461                    | 50,11        | 1.519.395                    |

Source: Created by the author using YSK data.

In the first round of voting in 2023, voter turnout reached a high rate of 88.92%. However, this rate decreased in the second round and even fell below the turnout in 2018. Similar situations were observed in overseas votes, which were 53.81% in the first round and 52.04% in the second round.

**Table 3***Turkiye -wide Election Results Statistics (2023 1st and 2nd Rounds)*

|                      | <i>First Round</i>     |                             |                              | <i>Second Round</i>    |                             |                              |
|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
|                      | <i>Vote Percentage</i> | <i>Total Votes Received</i> | <i>Overseas-Customs Vote</i> | <i>Vote Percentage</i> | <i>Total Votes Received</i> | <i>Overseas-Customs Vote</i> |
| Recep Tayyip Erdogan | 49,52                  | 27.133.837                  | 1.047.740                    | 51,91                  | 26.690.529                  | 1.144.060                    |
| Kemal Kilicdaroglu   | 44,88                  | 24.594.932                  | 721.427                      | 48,09                  | 24.728.027                  | 776.697                      |
| Sinan Ogan           | 5,17                   | 2.831.208                   | 34.626                       | x                      | x                           | x                            |
| Muharrem Ince        | 0,43                   | 236.097                     | 19.313                       | x                      | x                           | x                            |

Source: Created by the author using YSK data.

According to the results in the table, Recep Tayyip Erdogan received 49.52% of the votes and Kemal Kilicdaroglu received 44.88% of the votes, advancing to the second round. In the second round, Erdogan received 51.91% of the votes and was elected President of Turkiye.

### 3 MALATYA PROVINCE 2023 ELECTION RESULTS

An examination of Malatya's political history reveals that center-right and conservative parties have long been strong, a trend also reflected in the presidential elections. In Malatya, where the Motherland Party (ANAP), the True Path Party (DYP), Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), Justice Party (AP) and subsequently the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) have found strong support bases since the 1980s, conservative values and a political line in harmony with the state have always been decisive. This socio-political identity is nourished by both the importance given to religious and spiritual values and a culture of social solidarity. Following major disasters like earthquakes, this allegiance has been further strengthened, with voters tending to maintain rather than sever their ties with the central government.

**Table 4***Malatya Election Voter Turnout Statistics (2018-2023)*

|                    | <i>2023 Second Round</i> | <i>2023 First Round</i> | <i>2018</i> |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Total Voters       | 531.620                  | 531.448                 | 555.349     |
| Votes Cast         | 425.011                  | 434.196                 | 487.136     |
| Valid Vote         | 420.084                  | 426.839                 | 477.273     |
| Participation Rate | 79,95                    | 81,70                   | 87,72       |

Source: Created by the author using YSK data.

Table 5 contains figures for Malatya city center and its districts. Malatya has a total of thirteen districts, including the two central districts. The table includes the results of the first and second rounds of the 2018 and 2023 Presidential Elections in these districts. In 2023, we see that alliance candidates competed. When Muharrem İnce withdrew his presidential candidacy, the People's Alliance (Erdogan), the Nation Alliance (Kilicdaroglu), and the ATA Alliance (Sinan Ogan) competed in the first round. In the second round of the 2023 presidential election, ATA Alliance candidate Sinan Ogan did not participate, and the candidates of the People's and Nation Alliances competed.

According to the results in Malatya, Erdogan came in first by a wide margin in both rounds across Malatya. He received 69.19% of the votes in the first round and 71.96% in the second round. Kilicdaroglu, on the other hand, lagged behind the national average in Malatya, receiving 27.11% in the first round and 28.04% in the second. In Malatya, Erdogan received more votes in 11 of the 13 districts, while Kilicdaroglu received more votes in two (Hekimhan and Arguvan). Among the districts that stood out were Kale (89.85% – 1st round), Doganyol (82.47% – 1st round), and Darende (82.33% – 1st round). In these districts, Erdogan's vote share exceeded the national average by 30 points. The districts where Kilicdaroglu is strongest are Arguvan (79.20% – 1st round), Hekimhan (55.22% – 1st round), and Arapgir (42.89% – 1st round). These districts stand out as areas where the opposition is strong in Malatya. Comparing the first and second rounds, Erdogan increased his vote share in many districts. He increased his vote in all districts except Arguvan.

**Table 5**

*Malatya Election Result Statistics (2018-2023, Province-District)*

|   |            | 2023 - Second Round |         | 2023 - First Round |         |      |      | 2018  |         |          |       |               |          |
|---|------------|---------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|------|------|-------|---------|----------|-------|---------------|----------|
|   |            | Kilicdaroglu        | Erdogan | Kilicdaroglu       | Erdogan | Ogan | Ince | Ince  | Erdogan | Demirtas | Akser | Karamollaoğlu | Perincek |
| 1 | Akçadag    | 40,25               | 59,75   | 39,34              | 58,14   | 2,30 | 0,22 | 33,85 | 57,17   | 4,59     | 3,71  | 0,61          | 0,07     |
| 2 | Arapgir    | 42,89               | 57,11   | 41,81              | 54,23   | 3,51 | 0,45 | 36,93 | 54,75   | 1,21     | 6,11  | 0,80          | 0,20     |
| 3 | Arguvan    | 79,20               | 20,80   | 77,86              | 20,90   | 0,94 | 0,31 | 71,62 | 18,90   | 8,28     | 0,89  | 0,16          | 0,14     |
| 4 | Battalgazi | 20,74               | 79,26   | 19,97              | 76,84   | 2,95 | 0,24 | 16,85 | 76,14   | 2,12     | 3,51  | 1,27          | 0,11     |

|    |                     |         |         |         |         |        |       |         |         |        |        |       |      |
|----|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-------|------|
| 5  | <i>Darende</i>      | 17,67   | 82,33   | 16,67   | 80,10   | 3,04   | 0,20  | 11,16   | 82,16   | 0,77   | 4,69   | 1,12  | 0,10 |
| 6  | <i>Dogansehir</i>   | 40,21   | 59,79   | 39,72   | 57,05   | 2,89   | 0,33  | 33,68   | 54,98   | 3,05   | 7,10   | 1,04  | 0,15 |
| 7  | <i>Doganyol</i>     | 17,53   | 82,47   | 18,01   | 78,54   | 3,08   | 0,37  | 13,37   | 80,43   | 0,91   | 3,91   | 1,22  | 0,17 |
| 8  | <i>Hekimhan</i>     | 55,22   | 44,78   | 54,46   | 43,04   | 2,09   | 0,41  | 51,25   | 40,75   | 0,88   | 6,14   | 0,65  | 0,33 |
| 9  | <i>Kale</i>         | 10,15   | 89,85   | 10,94   | 87,72   | 1,17   | 0,17  | 7,45    | 89,33   | 0,67   | 1,79   | 0,76  | 0,00 |
| 10 | <i>Kuluncak</i>     | 32,94   | 67,06   | 31,58   | 65,19   | 2,93   | 0,30  | 28,07   | 64,31   | 1,04   | 6,02   | 0,49  | 0,08 |
| 11 | <i>Puturge</i>      | 16,26   | 83,74   | 16,08   | 81,96   | 1,72   | 0,23  | 11,49   | 83,25   | 1,09   | 3,00   | 1,07  | 0,10 |
| 12 | <i>Yazihan</i>      | 33,82   | 66,18   | 34,58   | 63,45   | 1,76   | 0,21  | 25,78   | 63,98   | 6,85   | 2,52   | 0,73  | 0,13 |
| 13 | <i>Yesilyurt</i>    | 29,47   | 70,53   | 28,20   | 67,51   | 4,07   | 0,23  | 24,23   | 67,49   | 1,94   | 5,01   | 1,22  | 0,11 |
|    | <i>Voting Perc.</i> | 28,04   | 71,96   | 27,11   | 69,39   | 3,26   | 0,25  | 22,95   | 69,19   | 2,20   | 4,39   | 1,15  | 0,12 |
|    | <i>Total Votes</i>  | 117.804 | 302.280 | 115.695 | 296.188 | 13.906 | 1.050 | 109.528 | 330.249 | 10.504 | 20.958 | 5.481 | 553  |

Source: Created by the author using YSK data.

#### 4 CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

In democratic structures, determining the electoral system is one of the most important political choices before the constitution, laws, or lawmakers. Naturally, electoral systems affect not only the number of political parties but also the structures within the political system. Electoral systems are therefore of interest to political scientists (Ozbudun, 1995). In democratic structures, the starting point of power generally rests with the people. Thus, those who are governed approve or reject candidates for leadership through elections. This is crucial for the existence of democracy. In the concept of democracy, which is defined as the rule of the people, voters transfer the authority to the representatives they approve, in accordance with the population and urbanization structure (Cam, 1990).

This table shows that Malatya is a stronghold for Recep Tayyip Erdogan and differs from the Turkish average. The results of the first and second rounds of the presidential elections clearly demonstrate that voter behavior in Malatya differs from the national average. It appears that voters in Malatya generally maintain a conservative-nationalist structure, and this structure is directly reflected in the election results. The high support given to Erdogan gains meaning within the framework of both Malatya's

historical political tendencies and current socio-political conditions, revealing the region's unique position in Turkish politics.

The fact that the opposition was able to gain prominence in only a few districts, namely Arguvan and Hekimhan, points to local dynamics that are outside the general political trend in Malatya. Among the main reasons for the relative strength of the opposition in these districts are socio-economic structure and cultural differences. Arguvan, a district long known for its left-leaning tendencies, has seen its voters' identity and ideological affiliations as decisive factors. In Hekimhan, similarly, higher levels of education, union activities, and the influence of left-wing traditions are observed. However, the fact that Erdogan is clearly ahead in almost all of Malatya, excluding these two districts, shows that the conservative line continues to dominate the province.

The post-earthquake period also played a critical role in understanding the election results. The major earthquakes in February 2023 profoundly affected social life in Malatya. During this period, the visibility of the state, aid policies, reconstruction efforts, and communication with citizens significantly influenced voter behavior. The fact that Erdogan further consolidated his votes, especially in rural and conservative districts, can be explained by the voters' desire to secure their own future by adopting a stance of compliance with the central government. In extraordinary situations like earthquakes, the prominence of state authority increased the tendency of voters to gravitate towards the ruling party. Therefore, the fact that Erdogan's vote share in Malatya is far above the Turkish average should be explained not only by ideological loyalty but also by the political psychology created by these extraordinary circumstances.

It can be said that the votes Sinan Ogan received in the first round largely shifted to Erdogan in the second round. This situation made the second round of the elections even more disadvantageous for the opposition. A significant portion of Ogan's votes represented nationalist tendencies, and the direction of these votes became a decisive factor in determining the outcome of the elections. In a province like Malatya, where conservative-nationalist tendencies are strong, the shift of Ogan's votes to Erdogan was not surprising. This transfer of votes helped Erdogan increase his vote share in Malatya in the second round, while further limiting Kilicdaroglu's already low support.

Another striking aspect of the results is that the distribution of votes among the districts reflects different socio-cultural identities. For example, while Erdogan's vote

share exceeded 80% in districts like Kale, Doganyol, and Darende, Kilicdaroglu received around 79% in Arguvan. This contrast shows that Malatya does not have a homogeneous structure, but rather harbors significant socio-political differences within itself. It appears that conservatism is stronger in rural areas, while the opposition receives relatively more votes in urban centers or areas with higher cultural diversity.

This demonstrates that Malatya holds a special place on the Turkish election map. The difference between Erdogan's vote share nationwide and his vote share in Malatya is over 20 points. This situation reveals that the province is practically a "safe haven" for Erdogan. The opposition, on the other hand, only achieved a certain degree of success in a few districts, but lacked the power to change the overall picture. The increased visibility of the state in the post-earthquake period contributed to shaping voter behavior in favor of the ruling party; This significantly impacted the election results. The possibility that Ogan's votes shifted to Erdogan in the second round further reinforced this picture. The Malatya example offers important clues for understanding voter behavior in Turkiye. Local socio-economic conditions, historical affiliations, identity preferences, and the psychological effects of extraordinary circumstances play a critical role in shaping election results. Therefore, when analyzing elections in Turkiye, attention should be paid not only to macro indicators at the national level but also to local differences. The election results in Malatya are one of the most concrete examples of this multi-layered structure.

In conclusion, Malatya's stance in the 2023 Presidential elections provides a concrete example of the impact of political polarization and local factors on voter behavior in Turkiye. The conservative allegiance observed in Malatya, the role of the state after the earthquake, and the influence of alliances have once again highlighted the importance of regional differences in Turkish politics. The analyses discussed in this study are of a nature that will contribute to the Turkish political science literature at both the local and national levels. Malatya should continue to be considered as a case study, especially for understanding how voter preferences are shaped during times of crisis.

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### Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

### Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

### How to cite this article (APA)

Yılmaz, H. (2026). PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN TURKIYE ON MAY 14, 2023 MALATYA. *Veredas Do Direito*, 23(4), e234449. <https://doi.org/10.18623/rvd.v23.n4.4449>