



türkiye ekonomi politikaları araştırma vakfı

How does Internet Usage Change in Turkey? An Assessment on Internet Users

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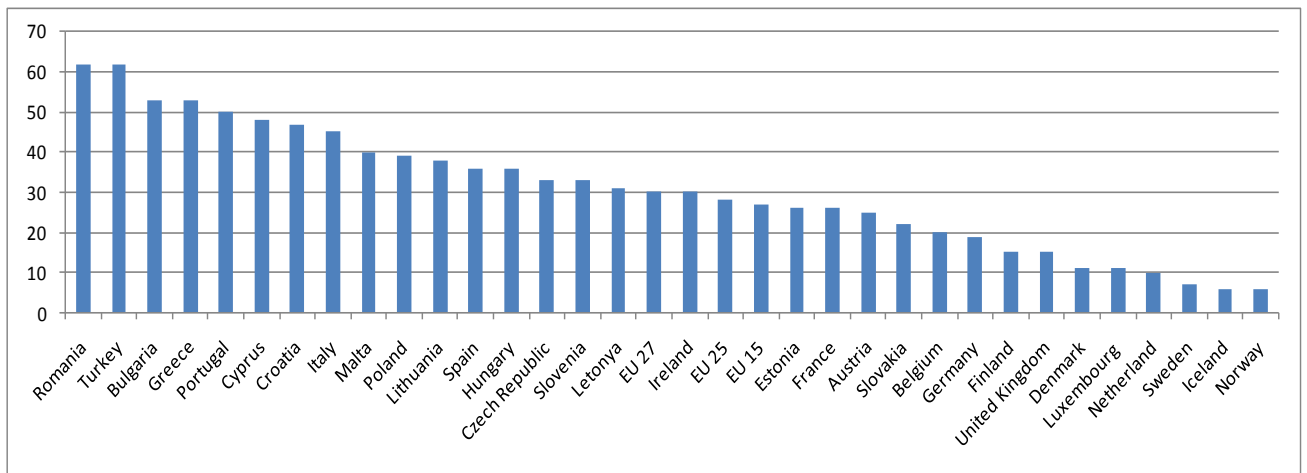
How does Internet Usage Change in Turkey?

An Assessment on Internet Users^Ψ

Today the rising need for communication in parallel with the advances in the technology comes to the fore as the primary cause of the spread of internet usage. Low-speed and high-cost internet accessed via dial-up connection as of the mid-1990s in particular, was made accessible to an increasing number of people with the spread of the ADSL services as well as the diversification of the number of firms operating in the market and the resulting competitive environment with the help of corresponding legal regulations.

Despite these, 62% of the population in Turkey has never used the Internet as per the date for 2009. The figure below compares Turkey with the European Union 27 (EU 27) countries on the basis of the population that has never used the Internet before:

Figure 1: Population that has never used the Internet before in EU and Turkey, (%), 2009



Source: EUROSTAT, TURKSTAT

According to the 2009 data, Denmark, Luxembourg, The Netherlands and Sweden are the countries where the number of individuals that have never used the Internet is the lowest. The highest rates are seen in Romania and Turkey, with 62%.

However, it can be concluded that the outlook of Turkey in this respect have improved when access to the Internet across households is considered. In 2007, 80% of

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- Ü. Barış Urhan, TEPAV Research Associate,
<http://www.tepav.org.tr/en/ekibimiz/s/1115/U.+Baris+Urhan>

households did not have internet access at home while this rate decreased to 57% by 2010. Concerning the reasons for not having internet access at home, it is seen that the rate of the households complaining about the high subscription prices have increased by more than 50% between 2007 and 2010. High computer prices are another reason that discourages internet usage.

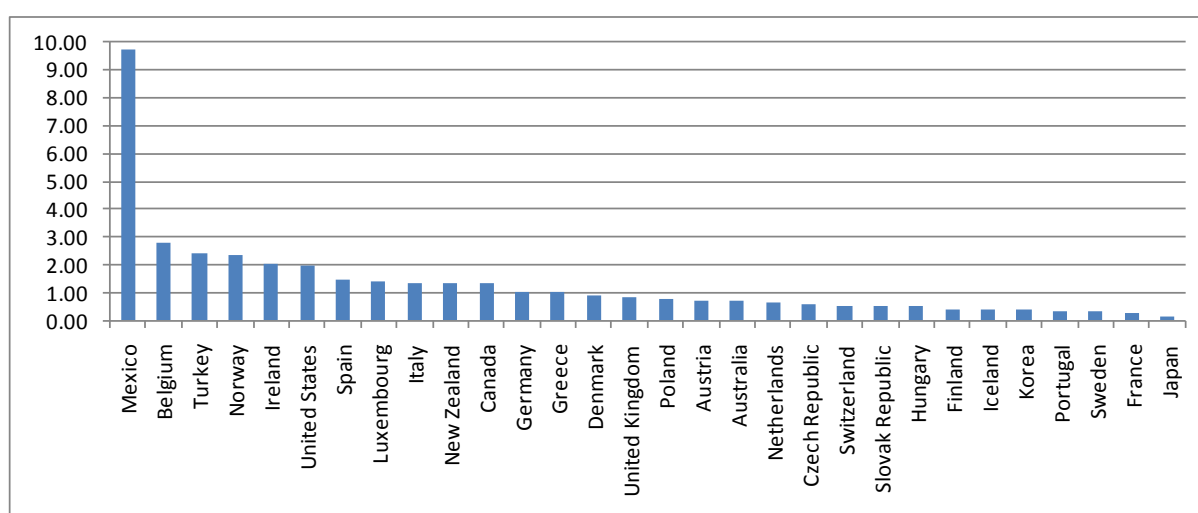
Table 1: Ratio of households that do not have Internet access and their motivations, (%)

	2007	2008	2009	2010
The ratio of households that do not have Internet access at home	80.3	74.6	70.0	57.2
Reasons for not having Internet access at home				
Cannot afford a computer or similar device due to high prices	36.0	36.8	39.9	33.6
No member of the household needs to use the Internet (content useless or uninteresting)	31.2	29.4	30.1	26.3
Has no idea about what the Internet is	20.8	17.6	13.9	13.1
Subscription prices are high (ADSL, dial-up connection, subscription costs etc.	12.0	11.3	17.3	19.4
Has access to the Internet in other places (at work, school, or Internet cafes, etc.)	9.0	9.3	10.7	10.1

Source: TURKSTAT

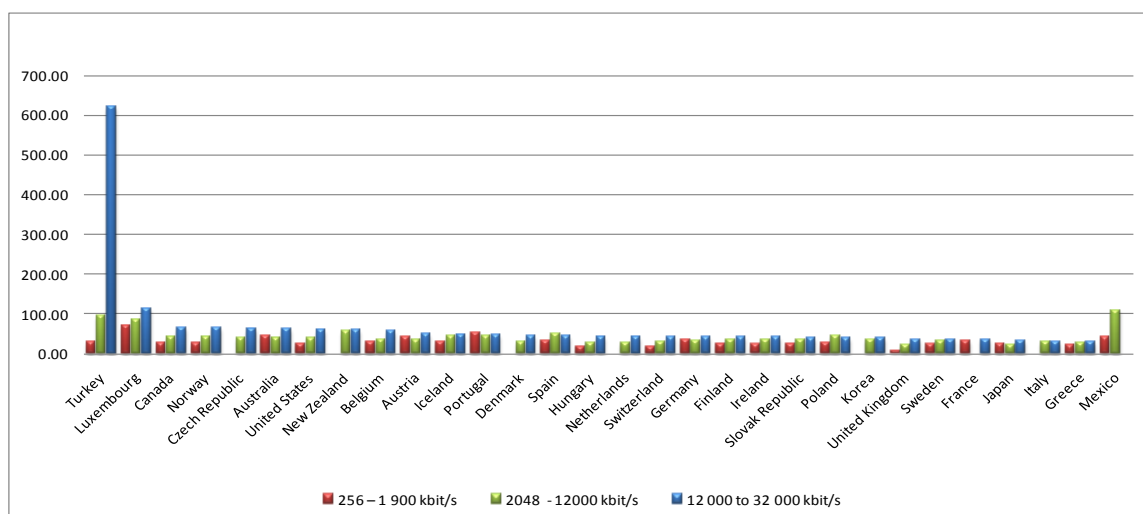
Comparison with the OECD countries suggests that Turkey is at the top three concerning the rise in the Internet prices by years. According to the OECD Broadband Statistics, in the scale where the lowest and highest megabit/second price is \$2.39 and \$76.11, respectively, Turkey is one of the countries with the highest internet prices.

Figure 2: OECD Countries, Lowest megabit/second price, in US\$ PPP, October 2009



Source: OECD Broadband Statistics

Figure 3: OECD countries, average subscription price per advertized speeds, US\$ PPP, October 2009



Source: OECD Broadband Statistics

A closer examination of the Internet subscription prices reveal that the service offered in Turkey is more expensive than many OECD countries for different Internet speeds. In Turkey, average subscription price for high-speed internet reaches \$621 whereas in the closest follower Luxemburg, the price of high-speed Internet subscription is only \$112.

Despite high Internet prices at OECD scale, access to the Internet among households has increased by almost 40% over the last three years. In addition, the gap between the urban and rural areas has narrowed down by approximately 10% in the last 2 years.

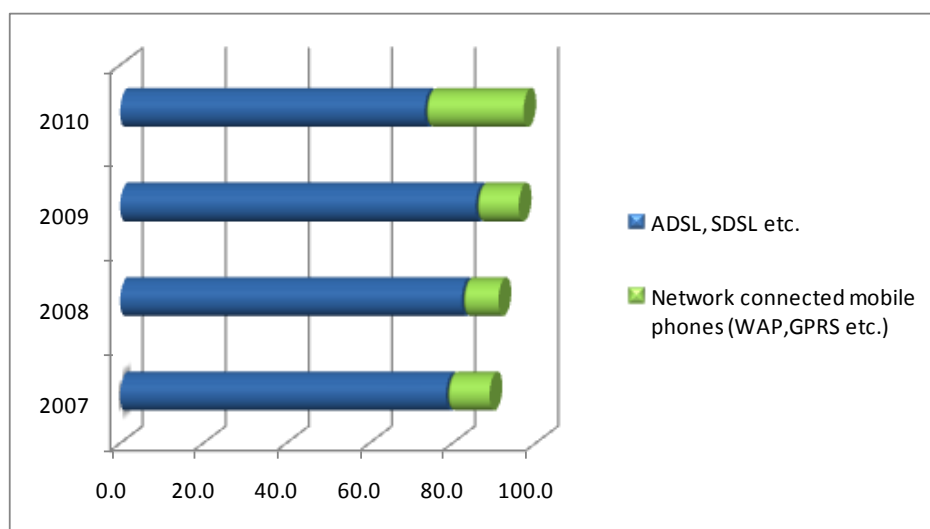
Table 2: Households that have access to the Internet, (%)

	Turkey	Urban	Rural
2008	25.4	30.4	12.5
2009	30.0	35.9	15.9
2010	41.6	48.7	24.0

Source: TURKSTAT

Concerning the connection type, it is seen that among the households that have access to the Internet at home connection via mobile phones increased by more than 100% in 2010. The main cause of this substantial increase is the introduction of the 3G technology to the Turkish market in the said year and the heavy competition in this platform.

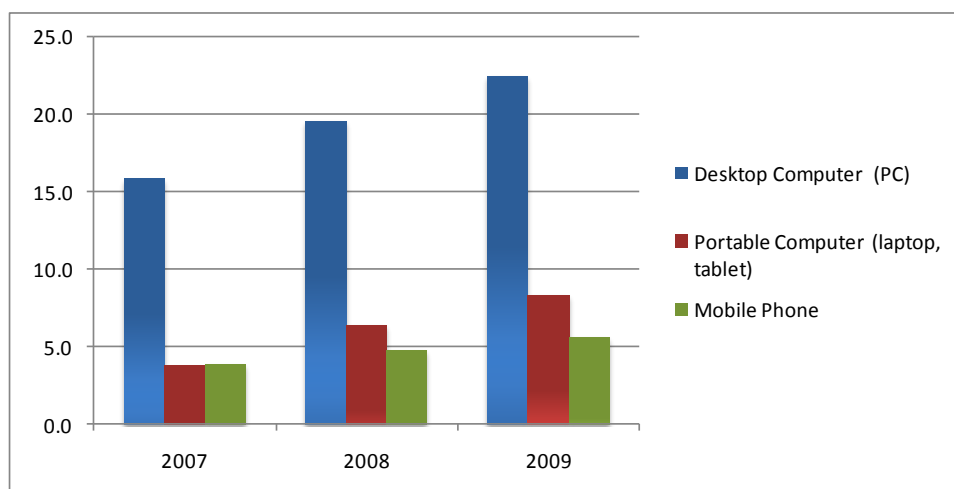
Figure 4: Connection type among households that have access to the Internet at home, (%)



Source: TURKSTAT

Another repercussion of this is that by 2010, ownership of mobile phones with internet access among households with mobile devices with Internet access increased to 15% leaving behind portable computers.

Figure 5: Households owning devices that enable Internet access, (%)



Source: TURKSTAT

The individuals using the Internet in Turkey concentrate in the 16-24 age group.

Table 3: Individuals using the Internet in the last three months, by age group, (%)

	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74
2007	50.4	32.3	23.8	14.8	4.8	1.4
2008	54.8	41.4	29.3	19.4	6.9	1.6
2009	59.4	45.1	30.2	18.6	6.2	2
2010	62.9	50.6	34.7	22.4	7.8	2.7

Source: TURKSTAT

The analysis on the Internet users by education level gives striking results. According to TURKSTAT surveys, more than 50% of individuals with educational attainment at primary level or more have accessed the Internet in the last three months.

Table 4: Individuals using the Internet in the last three months by education level, (%)

	Literate without a diploma		Primary school		Secondary and vocational secondary school		High and vocational school		Higher education	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2007	2.6	0.2	9.0	3.9	36.4	23.3	66.8	49.1	83.9	80.7
2008	6.5	0.8	14.0	5.9	45.2	35.6	69.7	57.0	87.6	85.1
2009	5.6	1.1	14.5	7.7	58.6	43.5	76.0	62.4	89.0	85.8
2010	8.7	1.1	18.7	9.6	59.7	46.2	72.1	66.6	90.1	88.8

Source: TURKSTAT

It is seen that between 2007 and 2010, the Internet usage of individuals with primary and secondary level educational attainment in the three-month period preceding the time when the survey was conducted have almost doubled. Here another striking point is that the increase in the educational attainment is directly translated into the Internet usage during which the gap between males and females tend to narrow down steeply.

By the employment status, it is observed that internet usage rates are similar across the unemployed, employers and regular and casual employees and that in the 2007-2010 period Internet usage have increased particularly across the employers and the unemployed by more than 10%.

Table 5: Individuals using the Internet in the last three months by the employment status in the time of survey, (%), selected categories

	2007	2008	2009	2010
In the labor force				
Regular and casual employee	63.2	72.6	56.8	62.6
Employer	54.2	67.7	66.1	69.2
Unemployed	42.2	48.7	41.6	50.0
Not in the labor force				
Student	82.8	83.3	88.2	91.6

Source: TURKSTAT

Among individuals that are not in the labor force, students constitute the group with highest internet usage ratio, 90%.

The analysis of the purpose of using the Internet gives interesting results compared to the EU-27 countries. For the 2008-2010 period, the top three reasons for using the Internet were sending-receiving e-mails, posting messages at chat and social network sites, and reading newspapers and magazines in Turkey and sending-receiving e-mails, finding information on goods and services and searching health information in EU-27.

Table 6: Internet activities of the individuals that accessed the Internet in the last three months, (%), selected categories

	2008		2009		2010	
		AB 27		AB 27		AB 27
Finding information on goods and services (does not involve ordering and purchasing)	44.5	50	52.9	51	55.7	56
Listening to web radios and watching web television	30.9	20	43.3	24	41.1	26
Reading/downloading online newspapers, news or magazines	75.9	26	70.0	31	58.8	34
Sending-receiving e-mails	73.6	53	72.4	57	72.8	61
Searching information about health (bruises, diseases, nutrition, etc.)	44.8	28	45.1	33	47.3	34
Sending messages and instant messages at chat rooms, news groups or discussion forums (real time chat on Facebook, Twitter, Chat, Msn, Skype etc.)	24.6	-	57.8	28	64.2	31
Telephoning over the Internet (VoIP)/ Video conferencing (with webcam)	21.4	16	49.8	17	47.1	19

Source: TURKSTAT

Another area that witnessed a striking increase in prevalence as a purpose of using the Internet was telephoning over the Internet. As of 2010, telephone/video conference over the Internet made by individuals that used the Internet in the last three months increased by more than 100% compared to 2008 and reached 47.1%. This also indicates the highest increase among the selected categories.

Conclusion

It is an undoubted fact that the Internet infrastructure has developed and the number of firms operating in the Internet sector has been increased in Turkey over the last five years. Even though it is still debatable whether or not this development signifies and advance, the impact of the penetration on the Internet usage in particular is clearly visible.

Although the said developments in the domestic market are rendered to be important for the future of the Internet, the censors in the last two years as highlighted in both Turkey's domestic agenda and in the world's agenda on Turkey have raised questions about how the Internet is perceived by the policy makers. The ban on the popular video sharing website YouTube which also caused problems in the access to Google applications widely used by the academics such as Googlemaps, Google Documents, Google Pages is still a matter of debate as to how the future of the Internet in Turkey will be shaped and how the concepts censor and ban will be defined in the literature in relation to works for the EU harmonization.

Another problem felt by the Internet users is the limited-unlimited quota practices coupled with the relatively high Internet subscription prices. On the one hand, EU member Finland 1 megabit/second internet subscription was accepted to be a legal right for citizens as of July 2010. On the other hand, in Turkey the debates on censorship occupy the technology agenda of the government supposed and obliged to produce technology policies in tandem with the EU harmonization efforts.

The discrepancy between the advertized and the actual Internet speed is another problem area about the quality of Internet in Turkey. Many of the currently offered Internet subscription packages present the speed as the 'highest attainable Internet speed'. In this sense given that the paid amount does not always correspond to the advertised connection speed and that the customer purchases the service for an uncertain Internet speed, problems in comparing the service quality in Turkey with developed countries are most likely to arise. For the *speed / subscription price* indicator used for the comparisons shall be considered in reality as the *advertised speed / subscription price*.

Despite these floats, Internet usage in Turkey has been increasing by years. Policies to be developed upon the identification that the Internet used intensely by the users below the age of 40 is an important tool to integrate a modern society with the world can

facilitate the acceleration of such developments. This is only how the users in Turkey can have access to borderless, more productive and free Internet services.