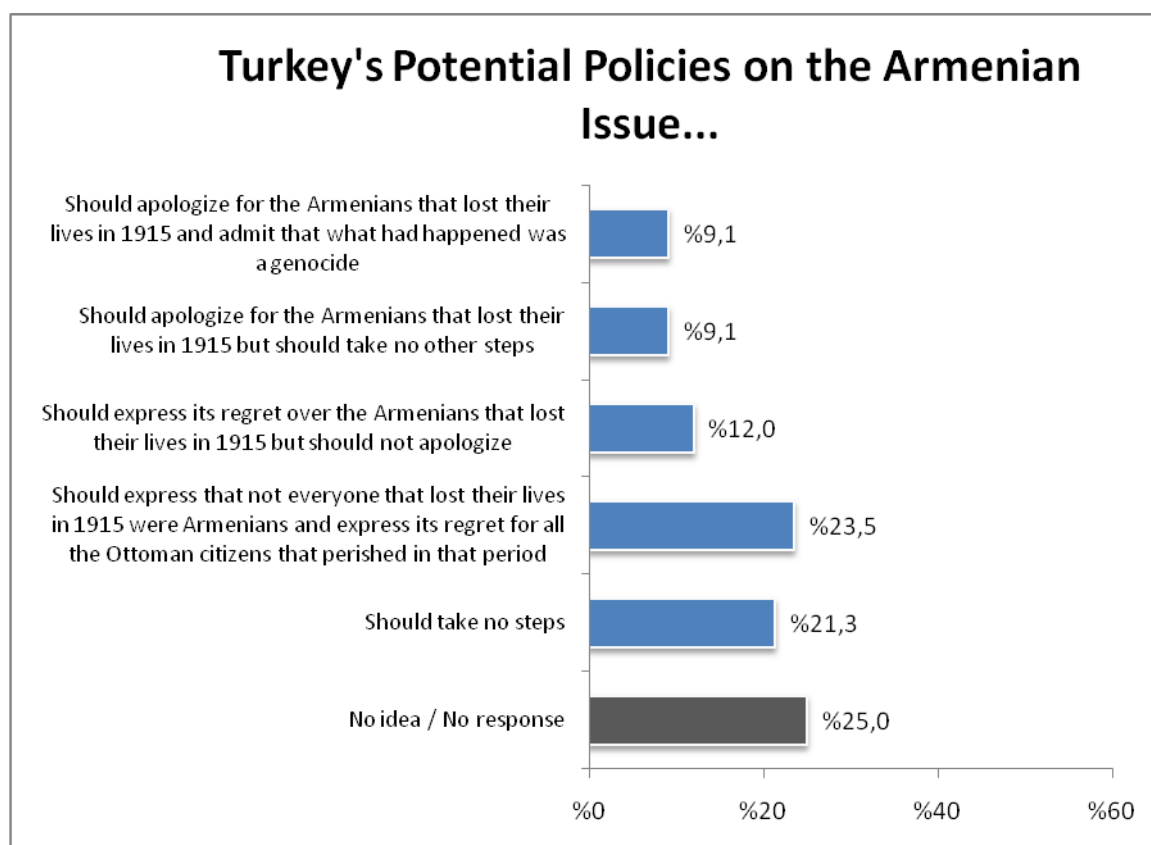


TURKS REGRETFUL OVER THE ARMENIAN TRAGEDY OF 1915 BUT REFUSE TO QUALIFY IT AS A GENOCIDE

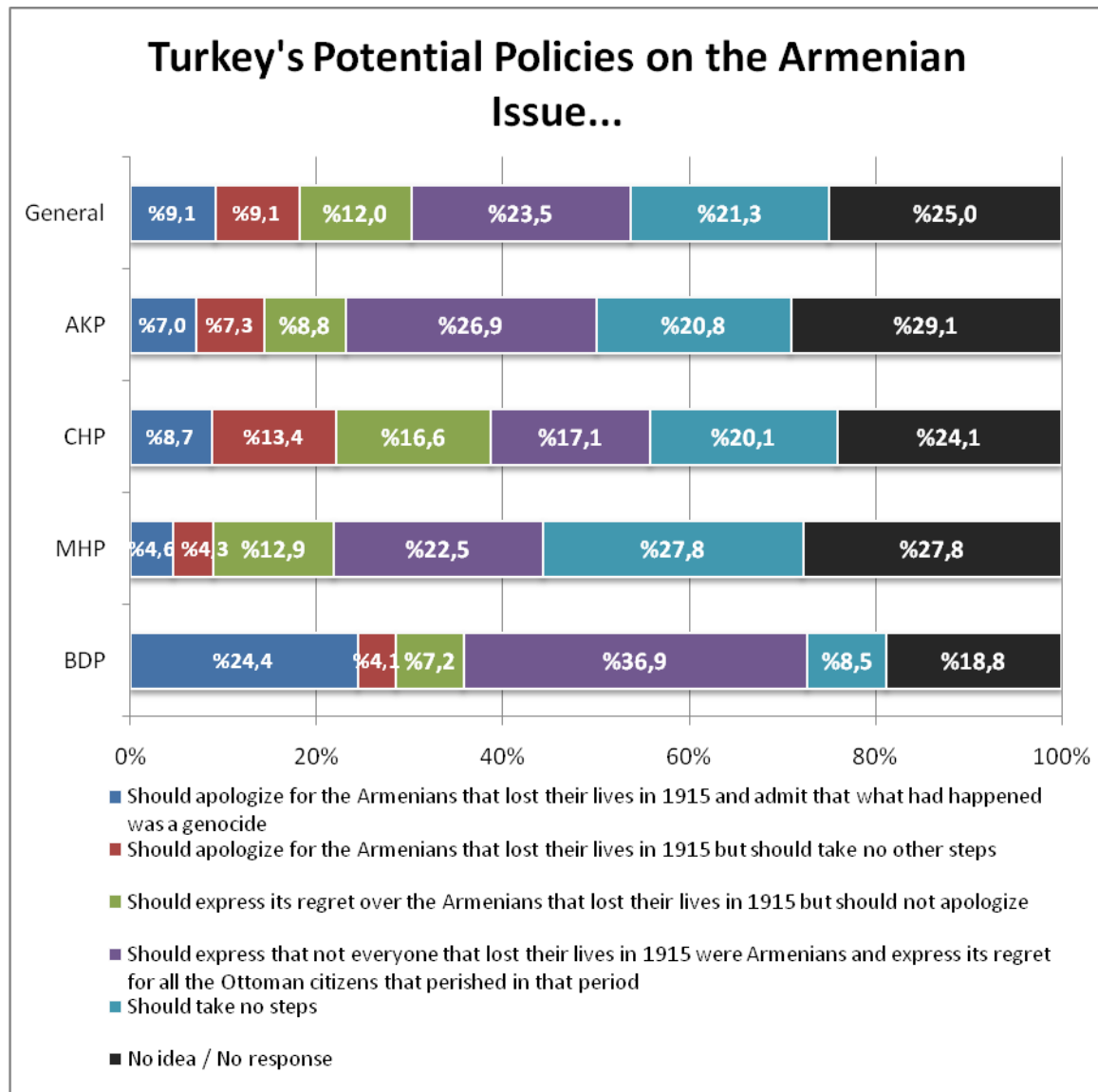


Between November 7, 2014, and December 7, 2014, a sample of 1,508 participants that represented the general Turkish electorate was surveyed on their views on Turkey's policy toward Armenian genocide claims that the country might face in 2015¹. According to a public opinion poll conducted by the Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM) via TNS throughout Turkey, a significant portion of the Turkish public supports the official government stance announced by Prime Minister Erdogan on April 23, 2014.

In addition to the 24 percent who argue that not all who perished in 1915 were Armenians and that the government should express its regret for all those – not just Armenians – who lost their lives, 12 percent argue that the government should express its regret for the Armenians who lost their lives in

¹ Survey question: "Next year, memorial services will be conducted and messages will be released throughout the world in remembrance of the Ottoman Armenians that lost their lives in 1915. Before these events, which of the following policies that I will read out should Turkey do regarding the Armenian issue according to you?"

1915 but not apologize. Only 9 percent of the public believes that the genocide claims should be acknowledged whereas 9 percent argue in favor of an apology without admitting to genocide. 21 percent of survey participants preferred Turkey take no action on the Armenian genocide claims.



The results of the survey highlighted the differences among various constituencies concerning Turkey’s official stance on Armenian genocide claims. While 9 percent of all participants suggest that the country acknowledge the genocide claims and apologize, this percentage increases to 24 percent among mostly Kurdish BDP voters. While there is no major difference between participating members of the ruling AKP and major opposition party CHP voters in this respect, the number of people who support an official apology falls down to 4 percent among surveyed nationalist MHP voters.

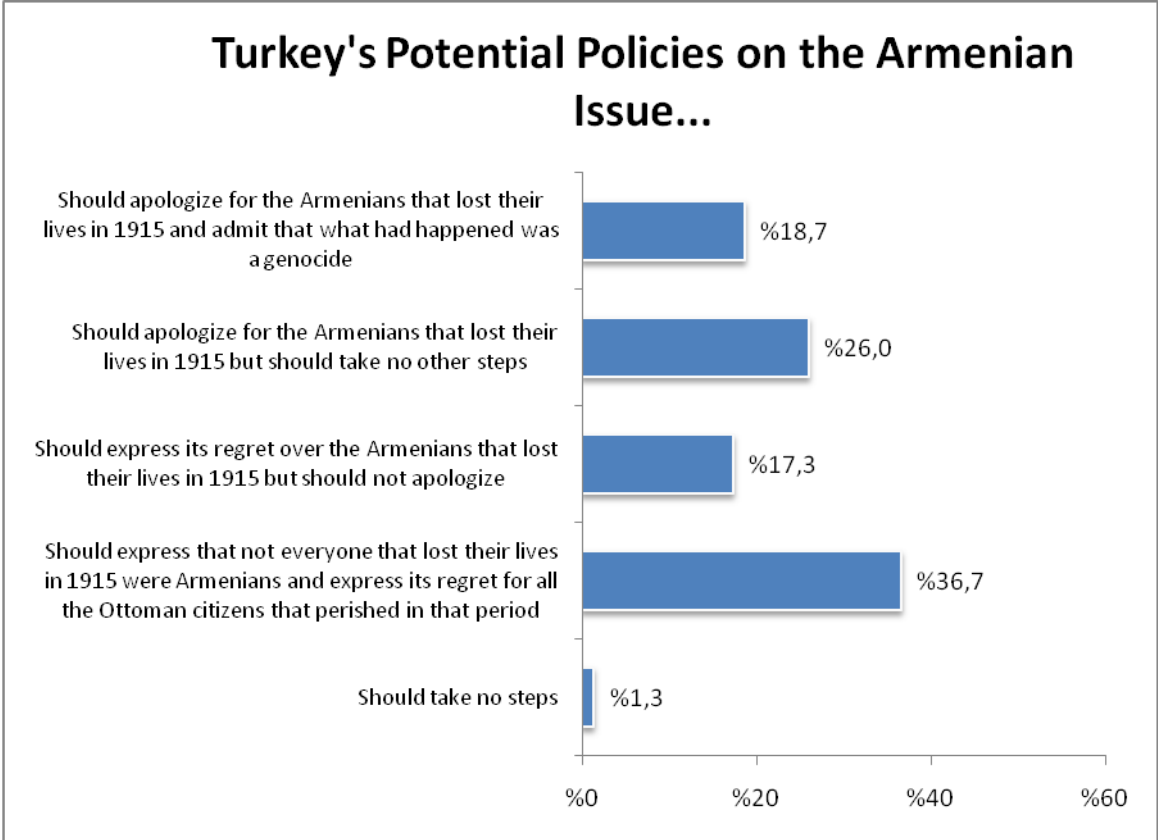
CHP voters do not favor recognizing genocide claims but they have favored apologizing more than other constituency. While 13 percent of the surveyed CHP electorate prefers this option, support varies between 4 to 7 percent among other electorates. When we add those that prefer the “should

express its regret ... but take no other steps” option to apologizing but not acknowledging genocide, it can be concluded that one-third of the participating CHP voters could accept steps that fall short of recognizing the genocide claims.

The most popular policy option, with 27% in favor, amongst AKP survey participants is for the government “to express regret for all the Ottoman citizens that lost their lives in 1915.” This is also the most popular policy option for surveyed BDP voters, with a total of 40 percent. An interesting result of the survey is that MHP voters are also supportive of this position. 23 percent of those surveyed who stated they would vote for MHP made this choice. In this regard, the “to express regret for all the Ottoman citizens that lost their lives in 1915” stance appears to be a favored policy independent of political party affiliations.

Among the participants who argue that Turkey should take no steps on the Armenian genocide claims in 2015, MHP voters rank the highest with 28 percent. While around 21 percent of participating CHP and AKP voters prefer this option, 9 percent of BDP voters support this line.

25 percent of the survey participants refrained from choosing any option. This was the highest among AKP voters at 30 percent. The no-response rate of 28 percent among participating MHP voters and 24 percent among CHP voters suggests that this stance extends beyond political party lines. The Armenian genocide claims continue to be a sensitive issue for the Turkish electorate and this sensitivity is shared across all electorates.



The same question was asked to a panel of 150 foreign policy experts². Their responses display considerable differences with the public opinion poll.

While only 9 percent of the public believe that the Armenian genocide claim should be recognized, this rate is at 19 percent among foreign policy experts. While a quarter of the experts argue that Turkey should apologize without recognizing the genocide claim, only 9 percent of the general public agrees.

17 percent of experts argue that Turkey “should express its regret over the Armenians that lost their lives in 1915 but should not apologize.”

The most popular policy option for foreign policy experts is to emphasize that all sides suffered losses and to express regret for all of the lives lost, not just Armenian. The fact that 37 percent of the experts and 24 percent of the public prefer this option suggests that this option presents a convergence of opinions.

The main difference between the experts and the public is that while 21 percent of the public argues that Turkey should take no steps in 2015, only 1 percent of the experts agree with this line. According to the experts, 2015 is not a year that Turkey can afford to stand by watching without taking any initiatives.

² 150 experts took part in the experts survey which was conducted by Infakto RW.