

## POLITICS

# Why more German Turkish voters could be voting for the anti-immigrant AfD

Germany heads to the polls on Sunday — and nearly 20% of its Turkish population is expected to back the far right, thanks in part to viral videos

**Jessica Bateman** — 19 February 2025



Supporters of Alice Weidel, co-leader of Germany's far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, wait for her to address an election campaign rally on 25 January 2025 in Halle, eastern Germany. *Photograph by AFP/Getty Images*

As Germany heads to the polls for snap federal elections on Sunday, a growing number of voters from Turkish backgrounds are expected to back the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) — thanks in part to a social media blitz targeting young people.

The AfD, whose proposed policies include a hijab ban, is currently polling in second place at [just over 20%](#) — double its [vote share](#) at the 2021 federal election. The conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which is likely to gain the chancellorship, has abandoned the refugee-friendly policies of its former leader Angela Merkel and is proposing an immigration crackdown, including [potentially unconstitutional](#) border controls.

Hyphen has identified several videos posted to TikTok in recent months showing Turkish-Germans declaring support for the AfD that have gained tens or hundreds or thousands of views each. Some are posted by anonymous accounts, while others do not identify their interview subjects by name, making the videos hard to verify.

In one video posted in November, five days after Germany's [ruling coalition government collapsed](#), 21-year-old Alice Monroe stated: "I am Turkish and I'm voting for AfD. The AfD is the only alternative. Germany is going down the drain."

About 1.2 million German voters have Turkish heritage, according to the [Turkish Community in Germany](#) advocacy group. [More than 80% of the community is Muslim](#); for decades, members were largely [loyal to the centre-left Social Democrats \(SPD\)](#), which built relationships with migrant workers through trade unions in the 1960s.

But support has waned in recent years, with Turkish backing for the SPD falling [from 60% to 35%](#) in the 2017 elections. Meanwhile, the percentage of voters with Turkish or Arab heritage who say they would consider voting for the AfD is nearly [20%](#), compared with single-digit support [among](#) the same group in 2017.

"This is my first time voting, and I have thought very carefully about the different parties," said Monroe, who lives in Cologne and works as an OnlyFans model. "I feel the AfD addresses many issues that other parties ignore or even fail to clearly name." On her account, she posts provocative videos mocking trans rights or complaining that she does not feel safe on the street because of "illegal immigrants".

While some users agreed with her, others questioned how Monroe — the daughter of a Turkish mother and a German father — could support an anti-immigration party. "Some people are surprised because I guess they assume migrants must automatically be against the AfD," she said. As for those who suggest the AfD would deport her if they came to power, "I say: 'Honey, I work, I pay my taxes.'"

Maximilian Krah, member of the European Parliament of Germany's far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party.  
*Photograph by Ronny Hartmann/AFP/Getty Images*

AfD politicians are also creating their own content targeting Turkish voters. Maximilian Krah, a prominent German MEP who made international headlines last year after saying not all members of the Nazi SS were “[necessarily criminals](#)”, recently shared a video of himself getting a shave at a Turkish barber in the city of Solingen. In the video he praises conservative Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and discusses Turkish-German collaboration during the first world war. [In another](#) video just before the EU elections in 2024, he urged Turks in Germany to “vote for a party that blocks further immigration”, adding: “Those who enter now — whose homes and jobs are they taking away?”

Furkan Yüksel from the Anne Frank Educational Centre, which last year [released a report](#) on the AfD's TikTok activity, says the party was quick to recognise the [app's potential](#) for reaching young voters. Mainstream politicians initially dismissed it as a platform for children and are now struggling to catch up. “The way the algorithm works means content can spread really quickly,” he said. [One investigation](#) found AfD supporters were running “guerilla” Telegram groups where members are encouraged to share the party's TikTok content and can win mobile phones if they make it go viral, effectively gamifying the process.

According to Yksel, the AfD is particularly targeting Turkish voters with messages opposing feminism, LGBTQ+ rights and the rights of refugees. “These are issues that also circulate in Turkish political discourse,” he said, giving the example of anti-refugee policies that were [a key topic](#) in the last Turkish elections, when opposition leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu promised to deport all Syrian refugees. “There is a long history of some people [with dual citizenship] voting ‘left’ in German elections, and [‘right’ in Turkish elections](#), and the AfD wants to tap into this.”

But Turkish-German TikTokers are also hitting back. Deniz Karabag, a 39-year-old German Muslim with Turkish-Azerbaijani heritage, who has 250,000 followers on the app, published a reaction video to Kraus’s barbershop trip in November, describing it as “a really clever PR stunt”. “The AfD is saying: ‘We don’t want all foreigners out — we only dislike the ones who are criminals,’” he said.

Karabag is the type of voter the AfD is looking to entice: he is still undecided on who to cast his ballot for, says he is disillusioned with mainstream politics, and does not agree with [former chancellor Merkel’s “open door” immigration policy](#). However, he is not convinced the AfD has his best interests at heart. “I believe most of the party is far-right extremist,” he said. Still, he understands why others may be swayed.



General secretary of the German Council of Muslims Abdassamad El Yazidi. *Photograph by Abdulhamid Hosbas/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images*

Germany is entering its [third year of recession](#), its public services are suffering from chronic underinvestment, and rents are rising [up to 18.4% a year](#) in some cities. “I’ve spoken to many people — not just of Turkish origin but also Arabs, Afghans — who are saying: ‘I’m fed up with this country. I’m going to do it — I’m going to vote AfD,’” said Karabag.

Özge Uslu, a board member of the Turkish Community in Germany, said mainstream parties were largely ignoring migrant voter groups, whereas the AfD was making an effort to speak directly to them. “The other parties need to speak directly to [migrant voters] and listen to their concerns, and they also need to improve their social media strategies,” she said. She added she has been pleased to see Die Linke (The Left) improving its TikTok presence and creating videos centred on Turkish and Arab communities, and hopes other parties will follow suit.

Abdassamad El Yazidi, general secretary of the German Council of Muslims, said that the

type of messaging the AfD is using to divide migrant communities would only lead to increased attacks on all people of immigrant origin. “This kind of political rhetoric against immigrants is translated into hatred, which leads to attacks against mosques and against Muslim people,” he said.

A week before the election, Monroe posted a video saying she was “tired of being asked to explain myself and my opinions” and urged followers to read the AfD party programme instead. Comments below the video were soon flooded with messages of support, many featuring the blue heart emoji that the AfD has adopted on social media. Some, however, expressed their continued confusion at her choice. “They are racist and they hate us, and you still want to vote for them,” one said. “You are making a big mistake.”

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