



# THE HUNGARIAN DREAM

What kind of future do Hungarians dream of for themselves and their country?



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# Impressum

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## The Hungarian Dream

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# Content

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Introduction	6
Do Hungarians Dream about their Future?	9
What Period During the Past Century was the Closest to a 'Golden Age'?	19
Who Helps or Hinders the Fulfilment of Dreams?	27
What is the Hungarian Dream?	33
Conclusions: This is the Hungarian Dream	45

# 1. Introduction

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The American Dream: A concept recognised the world over. A core tenet of the United States is that it is possible for anyone, regardless of their origins, social status, skin colour or creed, to build their own independent life in America. One can rise in status, achieve success, make a decent income for oneself or even become rich. As the US Declaration of Independence states, all Americans have the right to '*life, & liberty, & the pursuit of happiness*.' Examples drawn from real life and from hundreds of Hollywood movies reinforce the attainability of this American Dream: Penniless immigrants become billionaires, dispossessed vagrants turn their lives around, and even 'a skinny African-American kid' becomes President of the United States. According to this conceptualisation, American institutions, liberal democracy, the rule of law and freedom ensure that anyone capable enough to succeed will find that the state places no obstacles in the way of that success. While half of Americans today express scepticism that the promise of this 'American Dream' can still be fulfilled, the myth, vision, and common goals which it bequeathed to the nation remain intact.

In the other countries it is difficult to find such concrete examples of a national 'dream.' From the UK to China there are countless instances of rulers or governments having dreams or aspirations for their country, but these rarely percolate down into the consciousness of ordinary citizens. In 2012 the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, in conjunction with the Russian Academy of Sciences, conducted a survey on the 'Russian Dream.' It transpired that Russians desire social justice and a strong, stable country, but the American vision of free markets and individualism – indeed western values in general – were supported by only a very small percentage of Russians. Differing historical development and institutions, as well as cultural values, geographical situation and politics mean that the differences between the American Dream and the Russian Dream are readily explicable. But what

of Hungary? Does the Hungarian Dream lie closer to the American ideal of self-realisation and Western liberal democracy? Or is it more in tune with the Russian ideal of a strong state? Or might there be an entirely unique Hungarian Dream, unrelated to either? Do Hungarians even have a dream? Is there a shared goal, an agreement about what an ideal Hungarian society should look like, or even an 'ideal Hungarian life?'

Policy Solutions and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung's Budapest office were curious about these questions and so embarked on a large-scale study with one central question: 'What is the Hungarian Dream?' Over the course of this study, focus groups were organised in various population centres throughout the country – in Budapest, Miskolc, Győr and Szigetvár – alongside personal consultations with over a thousand participants, to develop a representative impression of the nation. These studies were completed during the summer of 2017, in conjunction with our partners at Závecz Research. The questions asked in the study can be divided into four broad categories: The habitual dreams of Hungarians, Hungarians' relationship with the past, the current plans and aspirations of Hungarians and the way they envision the future.

Those sharing this curiosity can find the results of our research in the following pages. We trust that our efforts will contribute to a better understanding of the motivations, feelings and future goals of Hungarian society, and thus help Hungarian politicians, business leaders, opinion-formers and researchers to work more effectively with the aim of encouraging Hungarians to dream, and of making those dreams come true.

► **Tamás Boros** / Policy Solutions

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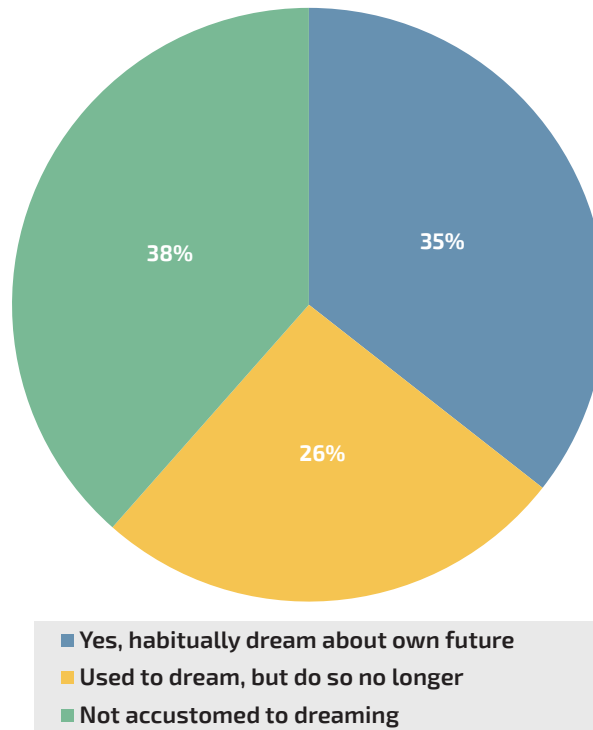
**Do Hungarians  
Dream about their  
Future?**

## 2. Do Hungarians Dream about their Future?

In writing about the 'Hungarian Dream,' the first step is to determine how exactly Hungarians relate to the concept of a 'dream,' **and whether they are in fact accustomed to 'dreaming' about their own future**. According to the research conducted by Policy Solutions and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, more than a third – 35% – habitually formulated dreams about their future, around 25% used to dream about their futures but no longer do, and 38% had never been in the habit of dreaming about their futures. **We can thus divide Hungarian society into three broadly even groups: dreamers, former dreamers and non-dreamers.**

1.:

### Do you have dreams for the future?

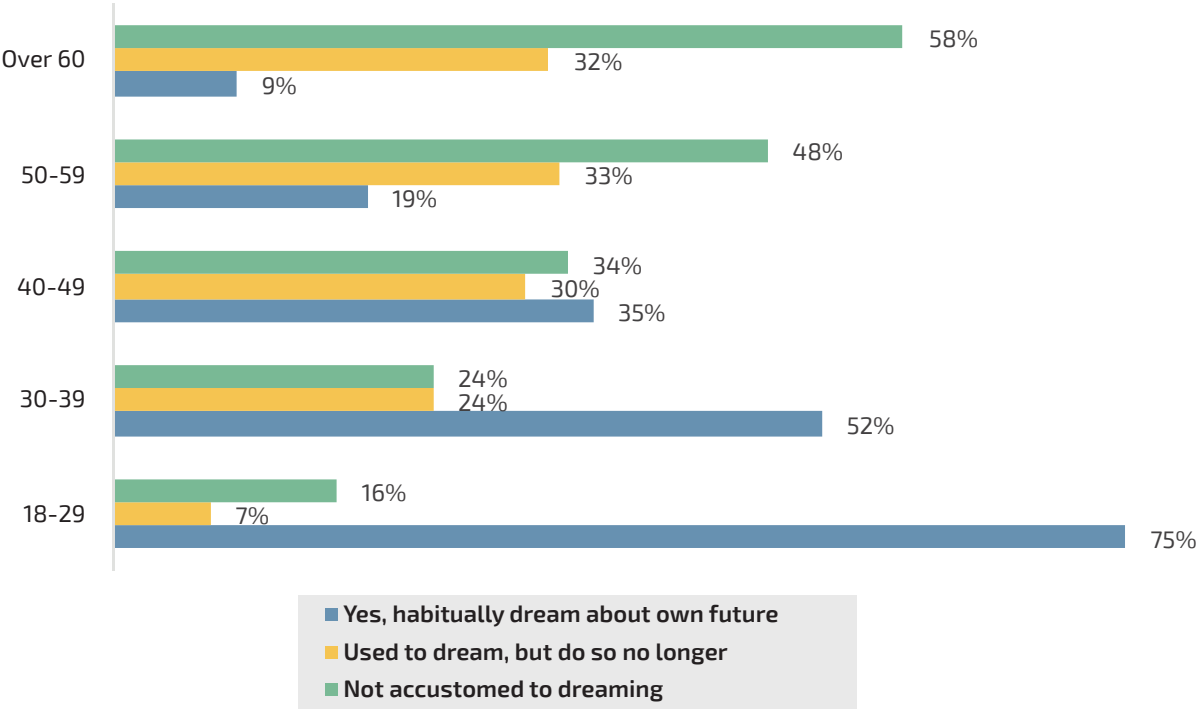


When it comes to dreaming about the future, the most significant factor is the age of the respondent, **since it appears that the younger the person is, the more likely they are to still dream about the future**. Among those under thirty, three-quarters still dream about their futures, while among those in their thirties this drops to just over half. **Among those over sixty, only nine percent were still in the habit of dreaming about their futures.**

**Young adults generally remain confident**, with only 7% having abandoned dreaming, and only 17% saying they never dreamed. Among those between fifty and sixty we find the largest number of those who have abandoned dreaming: A third of these respondents reported dreaming about their future when they were younger, but doing so no longer. Around half the same group said they had never dreamed about their futures. **Among those above sixty, a third no longer dream, while 58% were never in the habit of dreaming.**

2:

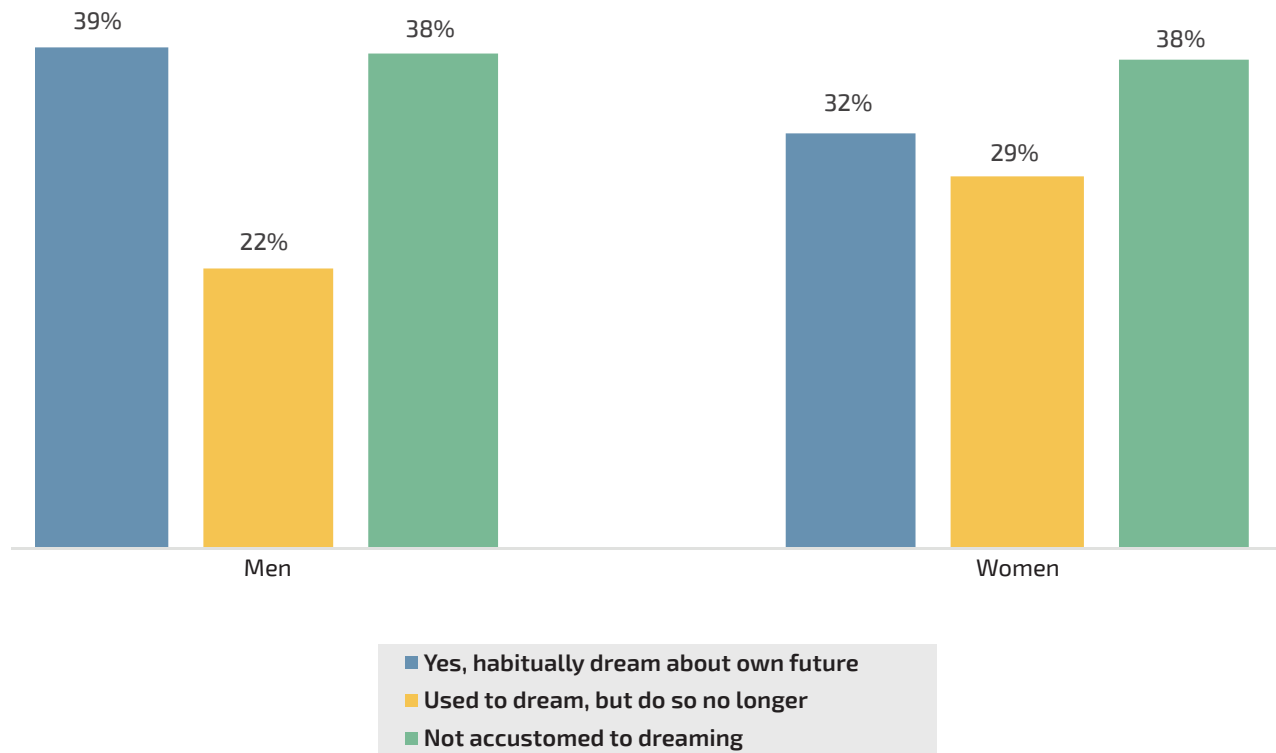
Do you have dreams for the future?



Though we find the number of men and women who never dreamed of their future to be more or less equal, the number of men who continue to dream as they get older is higher than among women. Fully 29% of women used to dream, but no longer do so, while among men this same group numbers only 22%. From this it can be inferred that **while the number of those with dreams was more or less even in the beginning, the number of men who gave up dreaming in disappointment is comparatively smaller than among women.**

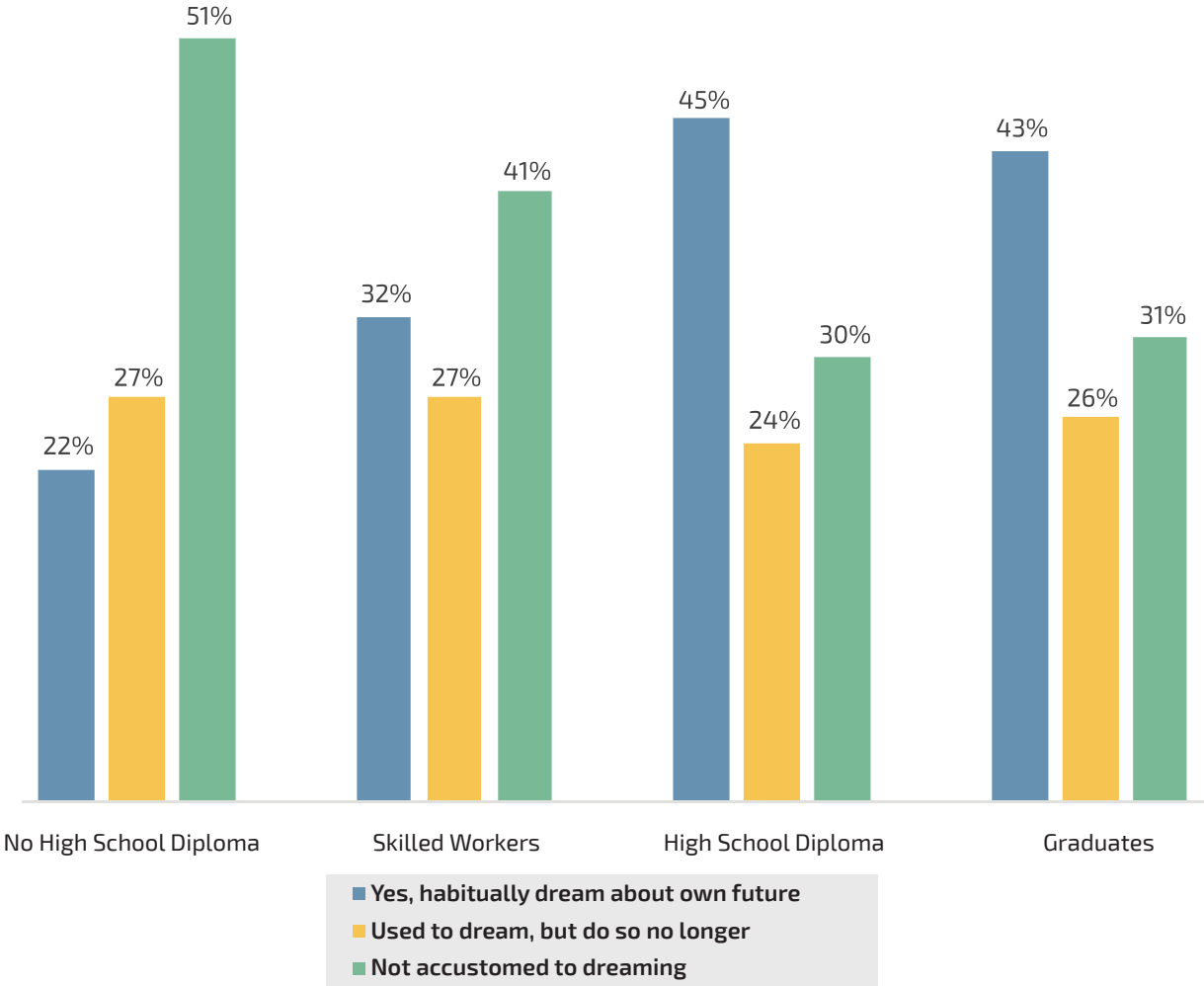
3:

### Do you have dreams for the future?



When it comes to young adults, we find successful school-leavers and graduates the most liable to dream, with around half dreaming about their own futures. **The most realistic – or most jaded – are those who only completed primary school education.** Among this group only 22% habitually dream about the future, while more than half never dreamed.

4:  
**Do you have dreams for the future?**

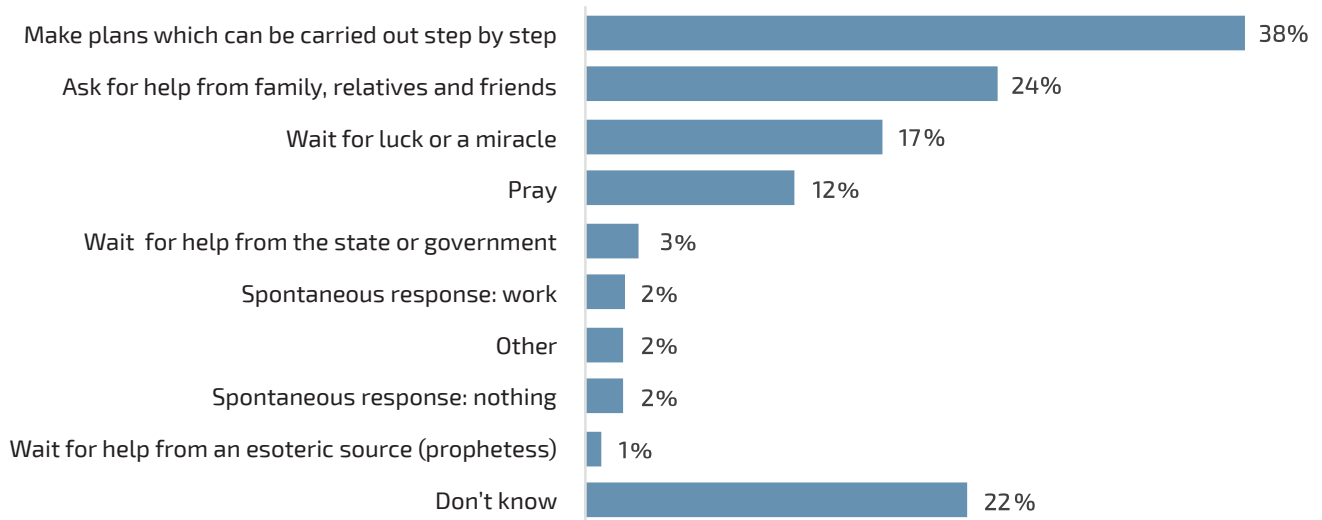




Even when it comes to dreams, Hungarians tend to keep both feet firmly on the ground: Most prepare plans for the fulfilment of their dreams, which can be implemented step by step. A quarter of those polled have asked for help from family members, while 17% are waiting for either luck or a miracle. 12% believe in the power of prayer, 3% hope the government will help them, while 1% put their faith in esotericism. **All this shows that fully 60% of respondents do not believe that their dreams can be realised through their own efforts alone.**

5:

**Now I will enumerate some things that are needed to fulfil the dreams.  
What do you do to make your dreams come true?**



From the answers given it appears that men plan slightly more consciously than women. The data also shows that **the younger someone is, the greater the probability that he or she will make plans for the fulfilment of dreams**, while we observe a similar correlation when it comes to levels of education: The more educated someone is, the more consciously they are likely to plan for the fulfilment of their dreams. While only 14% of those who did not graduate from high school make such plans, 62% of those with a university degree do so.

6:

**Now I will enumerate some things that are needed to fulfil the dreams.  
What do you do to make your dreams come true?**



**Asking for help from friends and family members – that is, the use of social connections – is most common among the young, while least among those above sixty.** It is interesting that **a greater number of men believe in the importance of luck (22%) than do women (13%),** though women are twice as likely to pray than men. Those in their forties are most likely to trust in luck for the fulfilment of their dreams, while **a quarter of those above sixty declare that they are most likely to turn to God.** Among those who did not complete secondary education, one fifth hope for luck or the assistance of God, while among university graduates this group numbers just 11 – 12%.

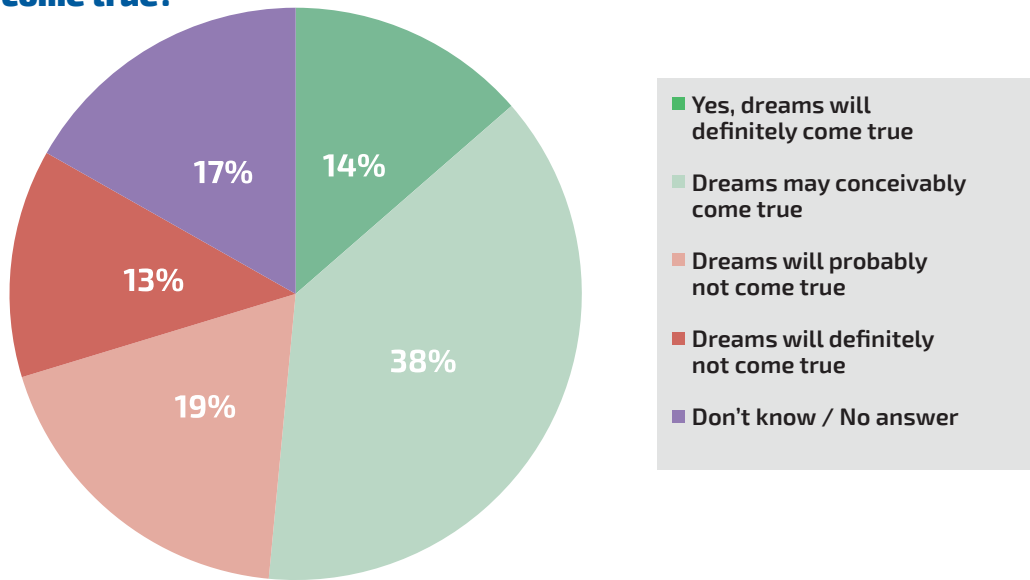
Overall it can be said that **a narrow majority of Hungarians are optimistic about the fulfilment of their dreams,** since **more than half of those surveyed have a positive outlook on the future:** 14% are sure of the fulfilment of their dreams, while 38% deem it possible that their dreams might come true. **A third of Hungarians are expressly pessimistic:** Of those surveyed, 13% are sure that their dreams will not come true, while 19% say it is unlikely that their dreams will ever be realised. 17% found the question impossible to answer.

Breaking the responses down once more by age, we can state that **the younger someone is, the more confident they are:** **Among those under thirty, more than three quarters are optimistic about the fulfilment of their dreams,** while among those over thirty this drops to two thirds. Among those in their forties this drops to 55%, then to 39% for those in their fifties. **Only a third of those over sixty remain optimistic.** It is interesting, however, that those in their thirties have more confidence than those under thirty: 24% of those in their thirties are sure that their dreams will come true, while this is true for only 17% of those under thirty.

**Optimism and the size of a community seem directly correlated:** 22% of those living in Budapest are certain that their dreams will come true, while 46% judge it likely. Among those living in regional cities, however, these numbers drop to 11% and 43% respectively, while in small villages these numbers fall to 14% and 24%.

7:

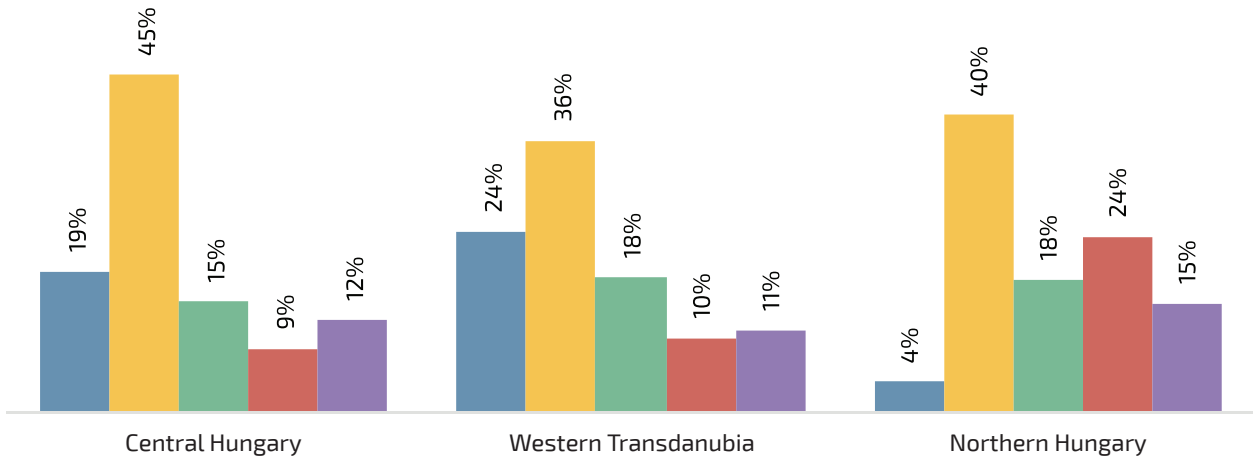
**What is your opinion: will you have a chance in your life to make your dreams come true?**



Geographically, the prosperous regions of **Central Hungary** and **Western Transdanubia** contain the most **optimistic Hungarians**: In these regions we find the greatest numbers of those who believe that the fulfilment of their dreams is probable, and also of those (almost a quarter of the population) who are certain of it. **Among those, by contrast, who live in the country's most underdeveloped region, Northern Hungary, only 4% are certain that their dreams will come true**, while this region also contains the highest number (24%) of those who are certain that their dreams will not come true.

8:

### What is your opinion: will you have a chance in your life to make your dreams come true?



■ Yes, dreams will definitely come true  
 ■ Dreams will probably not come true  
 ■ Don't know / No answer

■ Dreams may conceivably come true  
 ■ Dreams will definitely not come true

A white thought bubble with a scalloped border is centered on a solid blue background. Inside the bubble, the text "What Period During the Past Century was the Closest to a 'Golden Age'?" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The bubble has two smaller circles leading from its bottom right, suggesting a trail of thought.

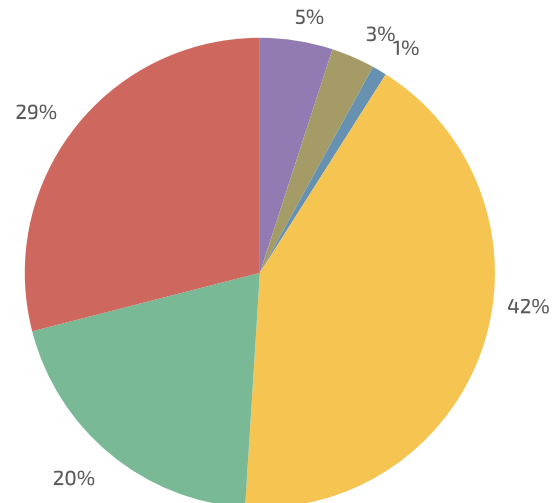
**What Period During  
the Past Century was  
the Closest to a  
'Golden Age'?**

### 3. What Period During the Past Century was the Closest to a 'Golden Age'?

An assessment of the past century or so of Hungarian history can be a good indicator of how Hungarians would like to live in the future. To the question of **which period in the Twentieth Century was the best for Hungarians, the Kádár Regime of late 1956 to 1988 was the most popular choice**. Four in ten believe that the pre-1989 period was the best for Hungarians, while **the post-1989 period known in Hungary as the 'Third Republic' is seen as a high point by only one fifth of respondents**. It is important to stress that **a third of respondents were unable to choose between the different eras, and did not view any as a particular 'golden age.'** In all our areas of research, this was the topic in which we received the greatest number of 'don't know' answers.

9:

**What is your opinion: in which great era of the 20th century did the Hungarians perform better overall?**



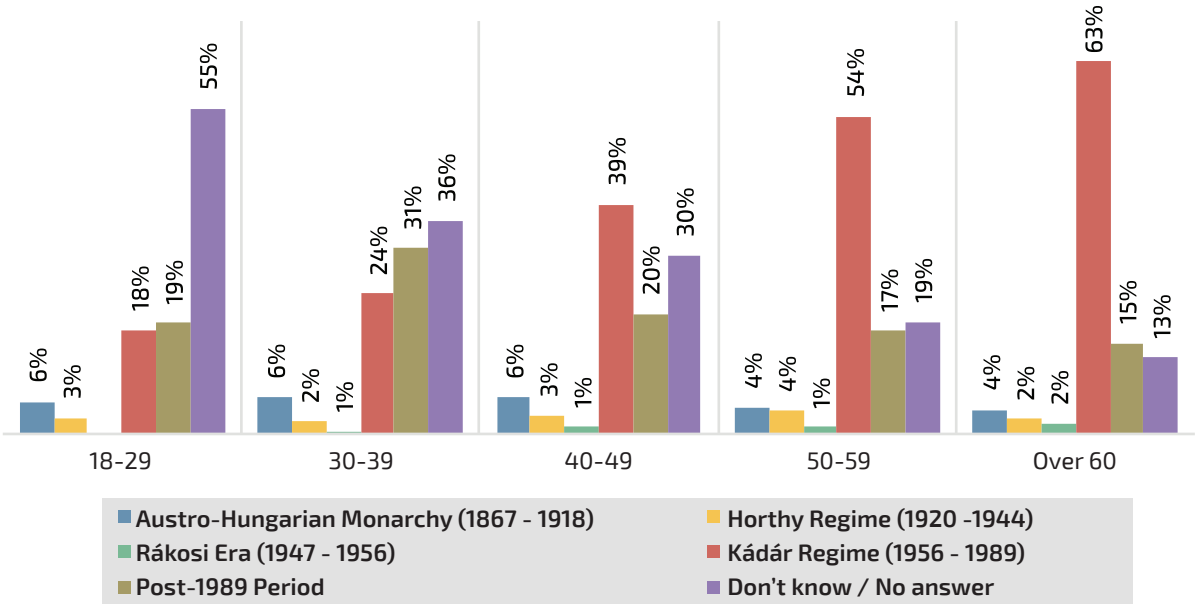
Other historical eras were chosen by only a small percentage of respondents, which may partly be down to a lack of personal experience. **5% chose the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 3% went with Admiral Horthy's ruling in the 1920s and 1930s, and only 1% chose Mátyás Rákosi's Communist dictatorship from 1949 to 1956 as the best period in the last century.**

Breaking these results down on the basis of gender, we see that women are more likely to view the Kádár period as the most favourable (45%) than do men (38%). Among men there are more who view the post-1989 period most positively. **Those under 30 seem the most unsure, with over 55% unable to answer the question.** Among those that did, only a hair's breadth more believed that the post-1989 world was better for Hungarians (19%) than chose the Kádár period (18%). **The degree of dissatisfaction among young people towards Hungary's past and present is attested by a pronounced willingness to emigrate.**

**Support for the period of 'Goulash Communism' correlates strongly with age, 63% of those over sixty** saying that the pre-1989 regime was the best for their compatriots. **Aside from those in the 18-29 age range, only those in their thirties chose the post-1989 Third Republic over the Kádár Regime.** Among this group, close to one third believe that the post-1989 period has been best for Hungarians.

10:

What is your opinion: in which great era of the 20th century did the Hungarians perform better overall?

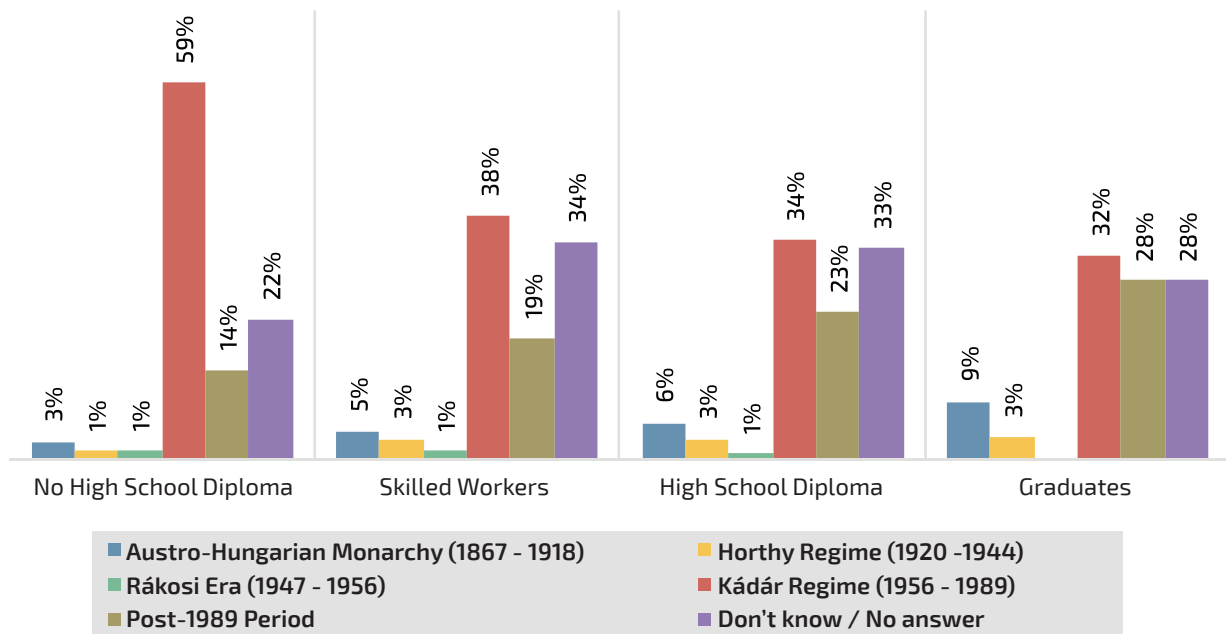




As far as education level is concerned, **support for the Kádár Regime appears to be inversely correlated with the level of formal educational attainment**: Among those without a high school leaving diploma, six in ten believe that the Kádár Regime was the most favourable, while this drops to just a third among university graduates. **This group particularly favoured the post-1989 period** and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The post-1989 period was chosen by 28% of this group, while the Austro-Hungarian Empire was chosen by 9%.

11:

### What is your opinion: in which great era of the 20th century did the Hungarians perform better overall?



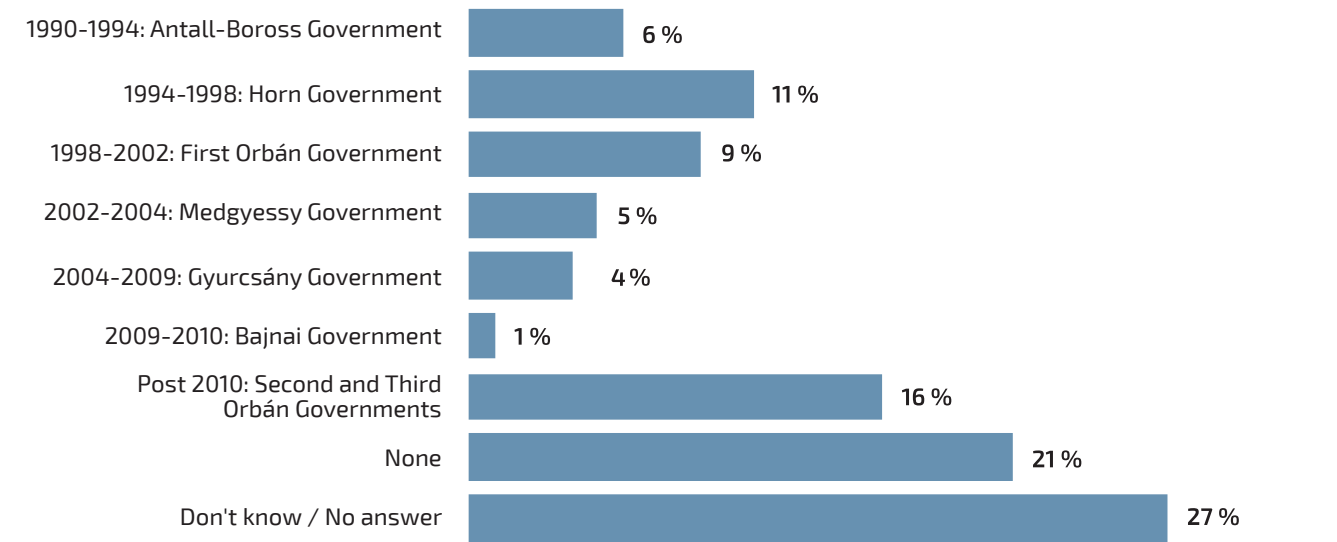
Support for the pre or post 1989 governments seems to also correlate with the size of the settlement: Only a third of Budapest residents chose the Kádár Regime as the most favourable period, but this rises to 42% in regional cities, and **almost half in the countryside**. **The post-1989 period, meanwhile, was chosen by 29% of Budapest residents**, a fifth of those in regional cities, and **only 15% of those in the countryside** as the best period for Hungary. Nostalgia for the Kádár Regime is strongest in Northern Hungary and the Eastern Great Plains regions, while it is weakest in the south-western region of Southern Transdanubia.

We were also curious to examine **which post-1989 government is viewed most favourably**. It appears that **the most numerous group were the most dissatisfied, with one fifth saying that no recent Hungarian government had made a positive difference**. A further 27% found the question impossible to answer. **Thus, barely more than half of respondents were even willing to choose one of the post-1989 governments.**

Among those who did choose a post-1989 government, **the most popular choice was the second and third Orbán governments (2010 -), with 16% of respondents stating that the present government had been the best for the country**. **The second most popular was the Social-Liberal government of 1994-98**, with 11% of respondents choosing the government led by the socialist **Gyula Horn**. Directly behind comes the first Orbán government of 1998 – 2002 with 9%, while 6% chose the conservative Antall-Boross government which won the first free elections in Hungary (1990 – 1994). The Medgyessy Government, which won power with the promise of welfare-system reform (2002 – 2004) was chosen by 5%, while the first and second terms of the ‘Blairite’ Gyurcsány (2004-2009) received 4%. **Only 1% believe that the crisis-management government of the socialist-liberal Bajnai Cabinet (2009-2010) was the best Hungarian government since 1990**. **Overall, 21% of Hungarians chose left wing (or liberal) governments, while 31% chose right wing (or populist) governments.**

12:

**What is your opinion: under what government after the fall of wall did the Hungarians perform best overall?**



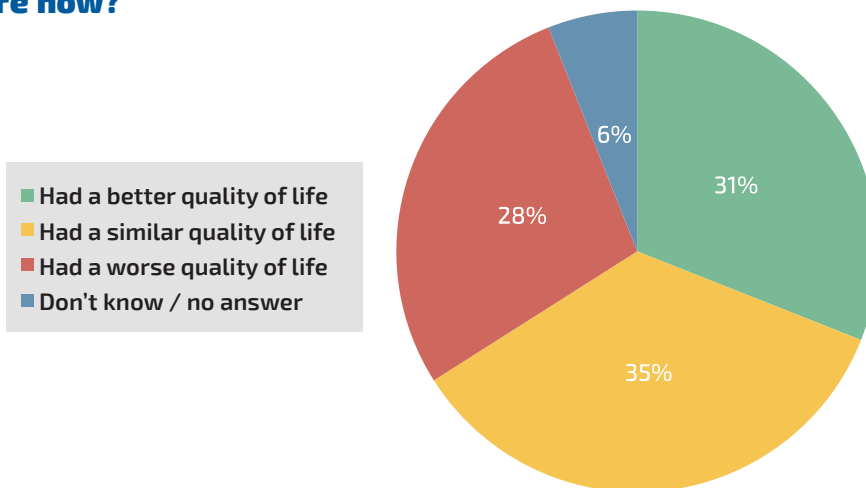
It is striking that among those under thirty, **almost half were unable or unwilling to give any answer to the question**. Among this youngest age group, the verdict on all governments was harsher than the national average. Those in their thirties appeared most dissatisfied, with 25% claiming that no recent Hungarian government had made a positive difference, though they judged the first, second and third Orbán terms the most favourably. Among those in their forties the Medgyessy government was the most popular, while the Horn government was strongest among those in their fifties. The highest proportion of those favouring the Ferenc Gyurcsány government (7%) were in the over-sixties group.

General dissatisfaction with the post-1989 period decreases proportionately with levels of educational attainment: While a quarter of those without a high school leaving diploma viewed no government favourably, this drops to 15% among graduates. **The Medgyessy Government found most support among graduates**, while the present Orbán government also shows slightly increasing support with higher levels of educational attainment, though here the effect is less marked.

**Nostalgia for the Kádár period is shown by the slightly more positive attitude which Hungarians have for the past, when we ask how they see the lives of their parents' generation.** Among those surveyed, almost **a third believed that their parents lived better than themselves**, when they were the same age. 28%, meanwhile, believed that their parents' lives had generally been worse. 35% did not believe there had been much change, and that their parents had lived broadly comparable lives when they were the same age as the respondent.

13:

**What is your opinion: how did your parents live when they were as old as you are now?**



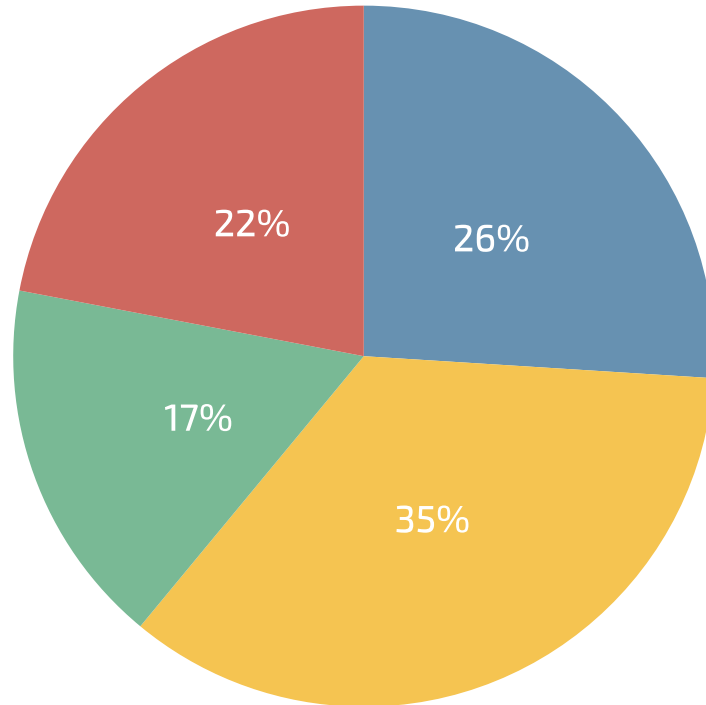
Among residents of Budapest, only a very small proportion believe that their parents had a worse life; they are more inclined to state that quality of life has not changed much. **The greatest proportion of those who believe that their parents had a better quality of life than themselves live in the countryside.** Geographically speaking, it seems that the greatest proportion of those who believe that their parents had better lives than themselves live in the North Hungary region, while the greatest number of those who believe that quality of life has not changed much are found in the Southern Transdanubia region.

Just as with the past, many Hungarians have a positive outlook on the future. **The largest group are those (35%) who do not expect any large changes in the future, but a quarter of respondents are optimistic, believing that their children will have better lives than themselves.** Altogether 17% believe that life will be worse for their descendants than for themselves.

Breaking the results down by gender, we see that **women are more likely to expect some change (either good or bad) than men. The most optimistic group are those Hungarians under thirty,** with a third believing that life will be better for their children than themselves. It is interesting that the two generations above them (those in their thirties and forties) show the least optimism, with only 22% of both groups believing that the future will be better than the present. **Those above sixty are the more expressly pessimistic, with fully a quarter expecting that the future will be worse for their children.**

14:

**What is your opinion: how will your children live when they are as old as you are now?**



- Will have a better quality of life
- Will have a similar quality of life
- Will have a worse quality of life
- Don't know / No answer



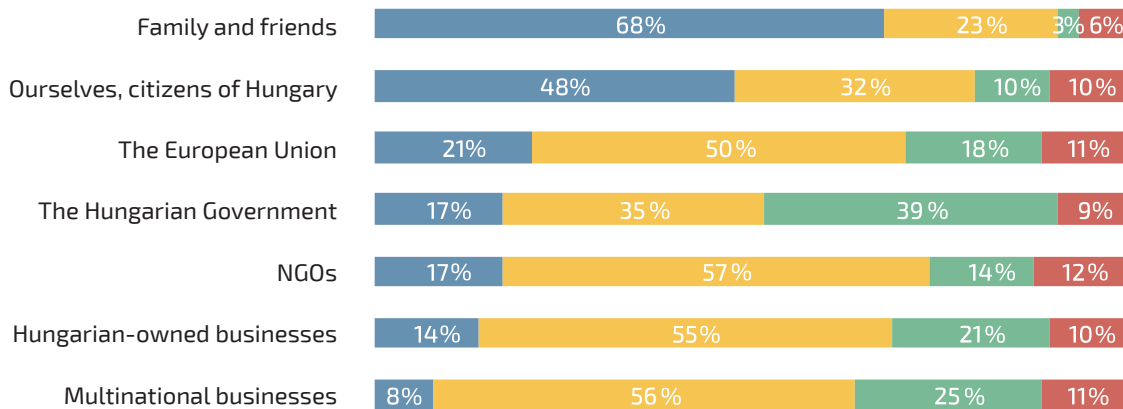
**Who Helps or  
Hinders the Fulfilment  
of Dreams?**

## 4. Who Helps or Hinders the Fulfilment of Dreams?

Dreams do not just come true on their own, but are helped or obstructed by a host of outside actors. We therefore set out to discover **who Hungarians believe is at their side, helping them fulfil their dreams.**

15:

**Evaluate the following actors, depending on their role in realizing the dreams of the Hungarians!**



■ Largely helpful  
 ■ No major impact  
 ■ Largely an impediment  
 ■ Don't know

**More than two thirds of Hungarians believe that it is primarily family and friends who help in the achievement of dreams.** After family and friends, the third more popular option that achieving one's dreams depends mostly on one's own efforts. **Around half of those surveyed believe we contribute to the fulfilment of our desires, while around 10% say we are more likely to stand in our own way.** Those in their thirties, those with high-school diplomas and those living in the westernmost (and most developed) regions of Hungary are more likely than their other compatriots to think that we contribute both to our own fulfilment and to that of Hungarian society as a whole.

Among Hungarians, **more believe that the European Union helps them in the fulfilment of their dreams (21%) than believe the same about their own government (17%).** A significant difference, however, is that while only 18% believe that the EU prevents the fulfilment of their desires, **fully 40% say that the Hungarian government undermines them in the achievement of their dreams.** Those in their forties have the most positive opinion on the role played by the government, while those who live in the countryside are most likely to see the government as simply a hindrance in reaching their goals.

It is an interesting piece of symmetry that **as with the government, those in their forties are also most likely to have a positive impression of the EU:** 29% said that the EU helps them in the achievement of their dreams, while only 12% said it does not. **It is clear from the data that the higher someone's level of educational attainment, the more positive their views on the EU.**

**Hungarian-owned businesses are viewed somewhat more favourably than multinational firms.** 14% said that Hungarian firms help them in achieving their dreams, while only 8% had a positive opinion of multinational firms. Breaking down the data by place of residence, **we see that the less populous the settlement, the more negative the views on Hungarian firms.**

As with Hungarian businesses, multinational firms are viewed most positively on average by those in their forties. Examined geographically, it appears that **the citizens of the disadvantaged region of Northern Hungary are most likely to believe that multinational companies hinder them in their lives, while those in the developed (and Budapest-dominated) region of Central Hungary are least likely to say so.** Despite the explicitly anti-multinational rhetoric of the ruling Fidesz government, its voters are most likely to say that multinationals help them achieve their dreams, while voters for the opposition Socialists are most likely to say that multinationals hinder them.



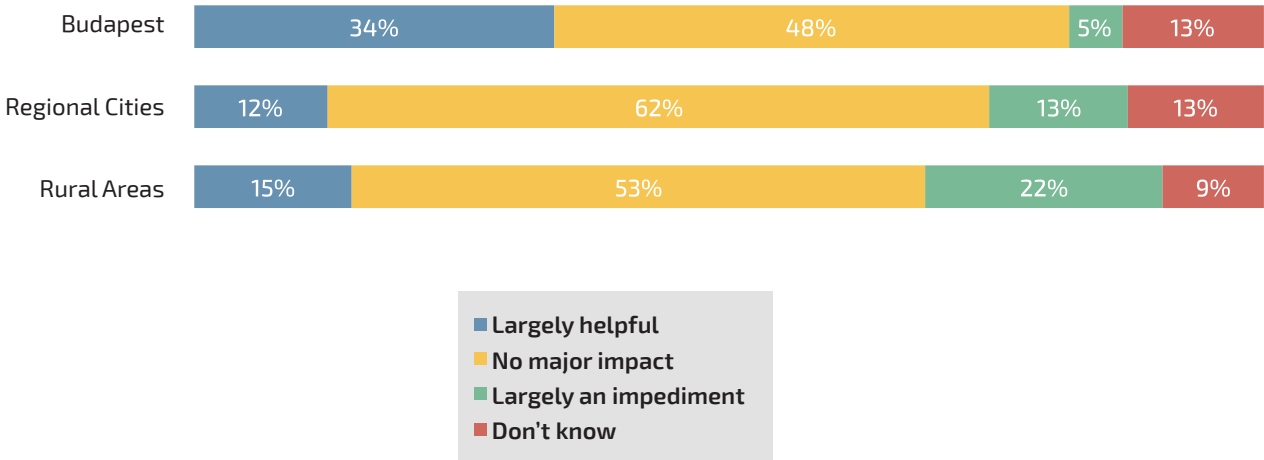
**Despite the government's anti-NGO rhetoric, Hungarians have a generally positive view on the work of NGOs.** Among those surveyed, 17% believe that NGOs help them, while 14% believe they are more of a hindrance in the achievement of their dreams. 57%, meanwhile, do not believe that NGOs have any effect when it comes to their dreams. Women generally have a more positive view of NGOs than do men.

Education level closely correlates with views on NGOs; the higher a person's level of education, the more positively they tend to view the work of NGOs. We can observe precisely the same correlation when it comes to settlement size, with only 5% of Budapest residents saying that NGOs hinder them in the fulfilment of their dreams, though **almost one in four rural voters believed that they harmed** the Hungarian dream. It is apparent that the Fidesz campaign on this issue had more effect in rural areas.

16:

**Evaluate the following actors, depending on their role in realizing the dreams of the Hungarians!**

**NGOs / civil organizations**



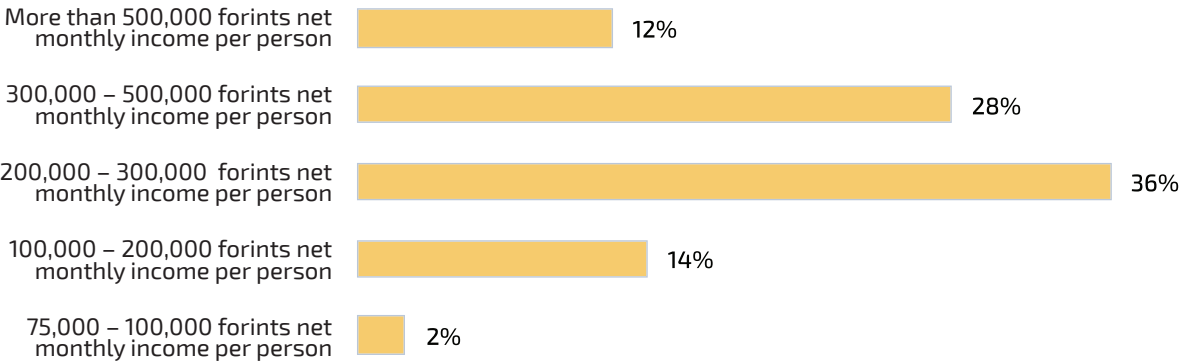
At the same time, it is surprising that despite the government’s sustained campaign against NGOs, Fidesz voters are more likely to have a positive view of NGOs than the national average. The opposition Socialists and the far-right Jobbik parties’ voters have the most negative opinion on NGOs, with a quarter of these saying that they hinder them in the achievement of their goals. Supporters of the small liberal parties are most likely to say that NGOs help them in the attainment of their goals. This may, however, be an issue more closely related to educational attainment than party politics.

As part of our research, we were also curious to learn **what role income plays in the attainment of dreams, and what would be the smallest monthly income which respondents would deem sufficient to live their dream.** According to Eurostat, the median income in 2016 was 124,000 forints (396 EUR), while mean earnings were 192,000 (613 EUR).

From the data it is plain that when it comes to income, **Hungarians do not just lag significantly behind Western Europe in actual earnings, but also in their financial dreams:** Only 12% of respondents said that an income of more than 500,000 forints (1596 EUR) would be necessary for them to live their dream. **28% of Hungarians said that an income of between 300,000 (957 EUR) and 500,000 forints would be sufficient for their dreams, while 36% said that an income of between 200,000 and 300,000 would suffice.** 14% said that a total of between 100,000 (319 EUR) and 200,000 (638 EUR) would be enough.

17:

**What is the minimum monthly net sum that would be necessary for the life of your dreams?**

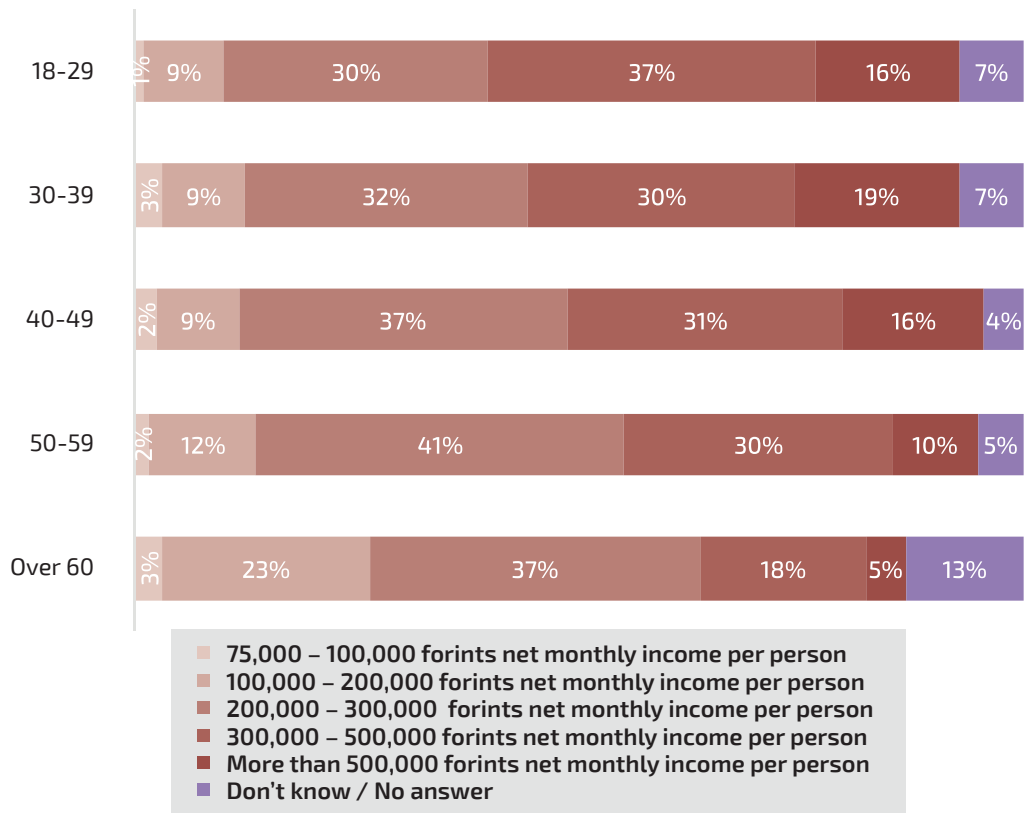



It is also evident that **men desire a significantly higher income than do women**. In all groups except the youngest, the greatest number chose between 200 and 300 thousand forints per month as sufficient, while **those under thirty were the only group in which 300,000 – 500,000 was the most popular choice**. **Young people seem generally the most ambitious**, with those in their twenties and thirties the most likely (16% and 19% respectively) to say they wanted more than 500,000 per month.

**A quarter of those with no high-school leaving diploma said they would be satisfied with a net income of between 100,000 and 200,000 forints**, while four in ten graduates said they wanted a monthly income of at least 300,000 to 500,000.

18:

### What is the minimum monthly net sum that would be necessary for the life of your dreams?





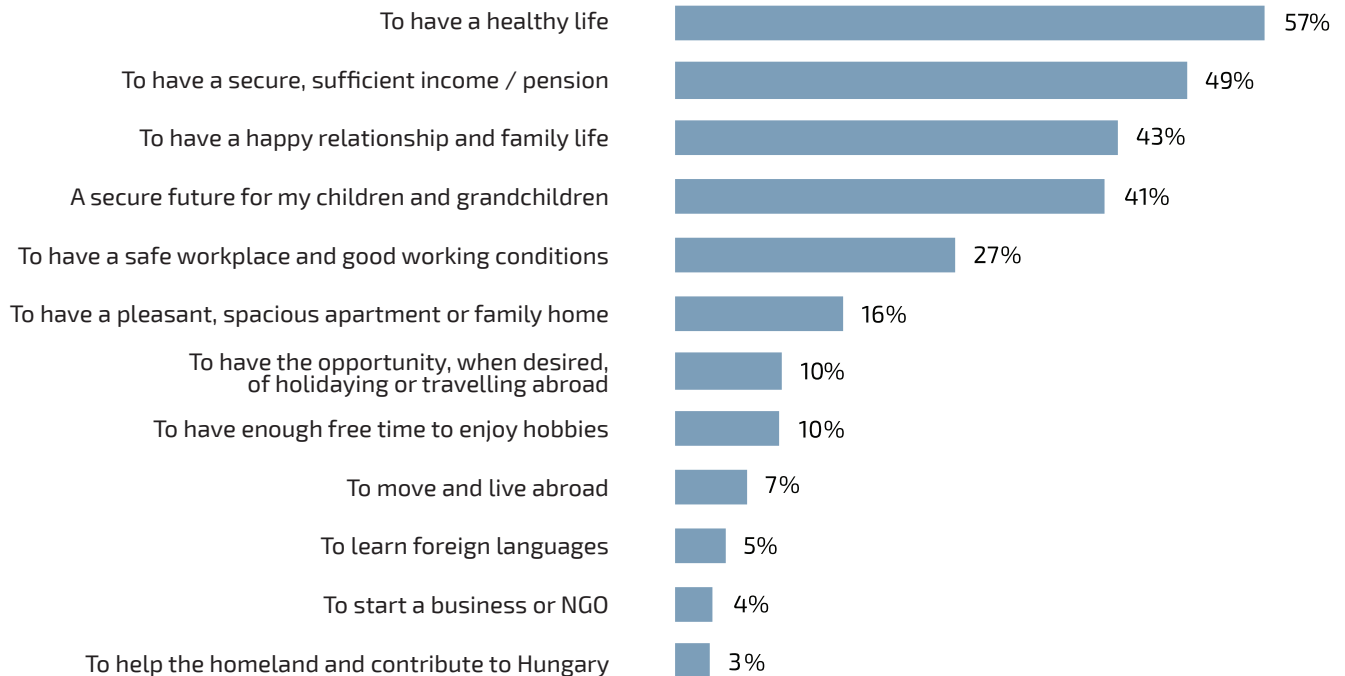
**What is the  
Hungarian  
Dream?**

## 5. What is the Hungarian Dream?

**According to research by Policy Solutions and the FES, the most important personal desire of Hungarians is a healthy life.** Among respondents this option was chosen by the greatest number (56%) when asked what their most important personal dream was. This option was most common among those in their fifties (66%) and those over sixty (80%). By contrast, only 38% of young adults chose this option.

19:

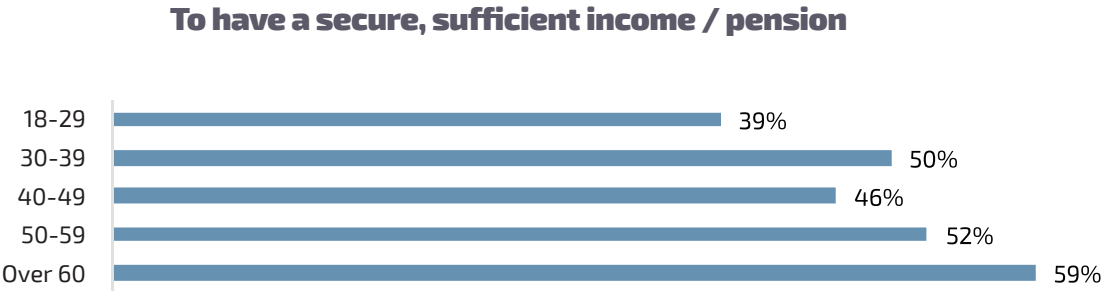
**On the screen you can read such topics that the Hungarians usually dream about. Please choose from these 3, which are among your most important personal dreams.**



After health, the most common response was **a stable and secure income and pension to live on, which was chosen by every second Hungarian**. When respondents' ages are taken into account, we find that this choice was most popular among those over sixty, with 59% choosing it, while among the youngest group only 39% chose financial security as being among their dreams. This option was almost 10% more popular among citizens living in smaller regional cities (52%) than it was in the capital (43%), which is not surprising when we consider that wages in Budapest are substantially higher than elsewhere in the country.

It is interesting to note that there is **no statistical correlation between level of education and desire for a secure livelihood**; from those without a high school leaving diploma up to graduates, we find this desire for financial security at roughly equal levels.

20:  
**On the screen you can read such topics that the Hungarians usually dream about. Please choose from these 3, which are among your most important personal dreams.**

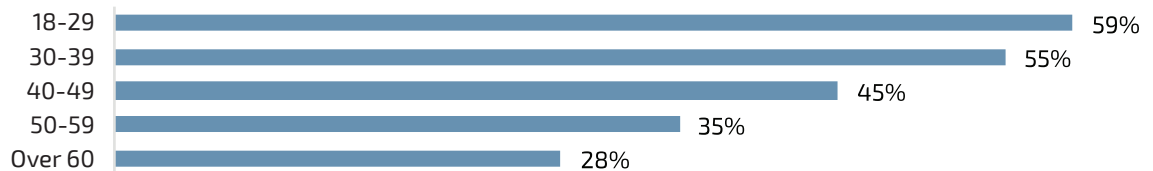


**A happy marriage or partnership, and dreams of a family life, were chosen by 42% of respondents**, and the younger they were, the more people were likely to dream of a happy private life. From the data it is also clear that the higher someone's level of education, the more important they tend to deem relationships and family. A similar variation can be observed between urban and rural respondents; the larger the settlement in which people lived, the more likely they were to have such dreams.

21:

**On the screen you can read such topics that the Hungarians usually dream about. Please choose from these 3, which are among your most important personal dreams.**

### **To have a happy relationship and family life**



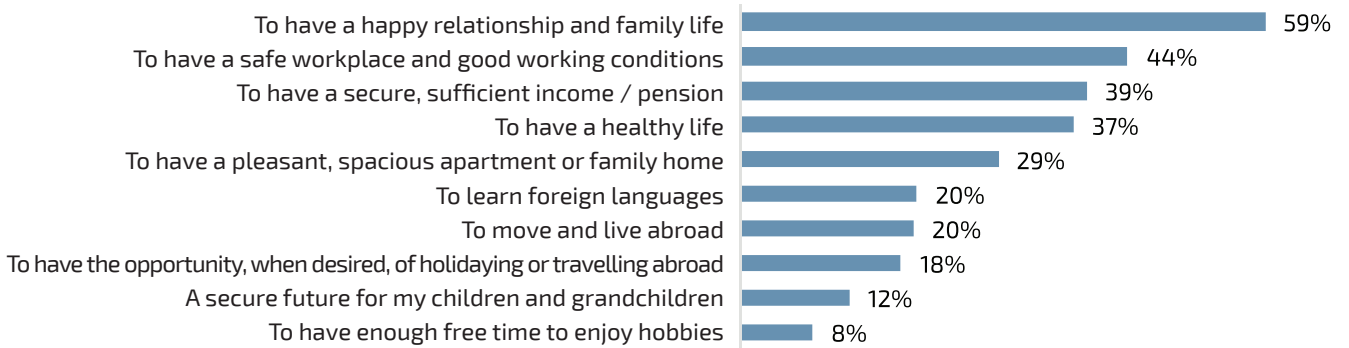
**The safety of their children and grandchildren first becomes a priority among those in their fifties**, with 53% of this age group choosing this option. The welfare of their descendants was also particularly popular among those without a high school leaving diploma. **A safe workplace and good working environment was a particular priority of young adults**, while a strikingly small number of those without a high school leaving diploma chose this as a priority.

**Young people are also significantly more likely to dream of a beautiful, spacious apartment**, foreign holidays, jobs abroad and foreign language acquisition. A particularly important piece of data is that **every fifth young person chose 'moving abroad' as one of their most important dreams**. Regionally speaking, dreams of emigration are most popular in the country's poorest region, Northern Hungary.

Interestingly, those in their fifties were most likely to choose the dream of ‘starting your own business or NGO.’ It is also interesting that those over sixty were most likely to choose ‘helping our homeland and doing something for the prosperity of Hungary’ (5%), in contrast to the **less patriotically-minded respondents in their thirties, of whom only 1% dreamed of doing something for Hungary’s benefit.**

22:

**On the screen you can read such topics that the Hungarians usually dream about. Please choose from these 3, which are among your most important personal dreams. (Answers 18-29 year olds)**



Examining the results by gender, we see that **men are more likely to dream of a secure job, nice home and plenty of free time**, while women more often chose **good income and pension, a healthy life and the security of their descendants.**



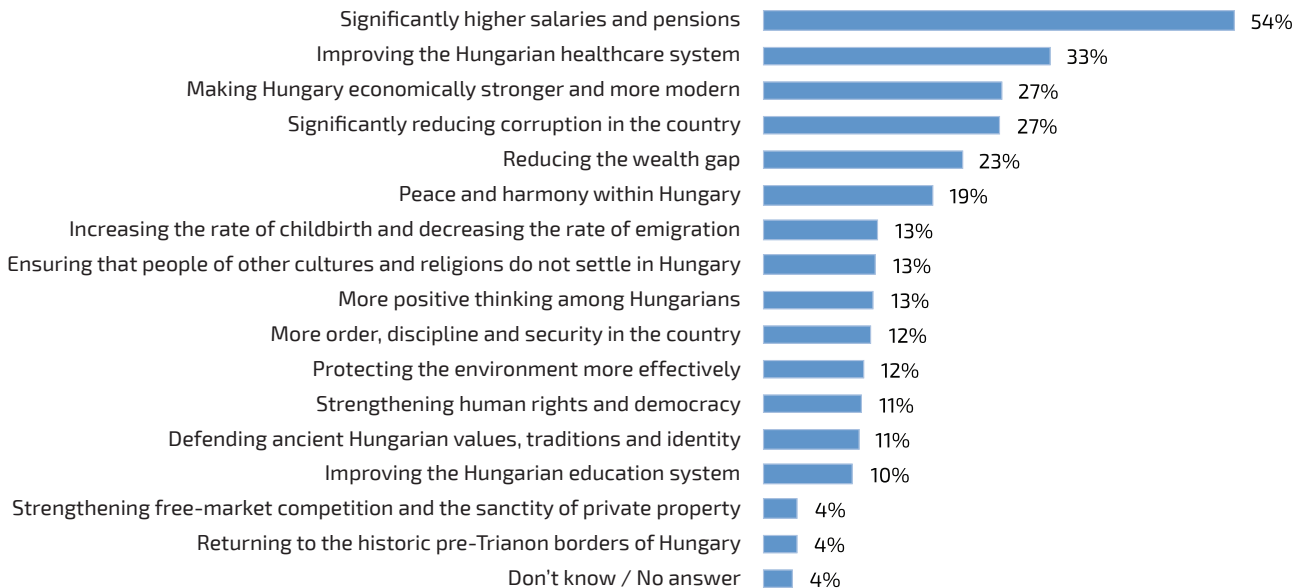
Beyond personal dreams, we also examined people's expectations for the future of the country, being curious as to what our compatriots thought necessary in order for Hungary to be a flourishing country in twenty years' time.

According to respondents, **the most important necessity for Hungary to become a flourishing country was a substantial increase in pay and pensions.** This option was chosen by more than half of those questioned.

**The second most popular option for a successful Hungarian future was an improvement in the nation's healthcare system,** which was selected by every third respondent. Improving the healthcare system was chosen more often by women (38%) than men (28%), and was chosen more than average by both those over sixty (44%) and voters for the Hungarian Socialist Party (43%).

23:

**On the screen you can read about those goals that may be necessary to make Hungary a thriving country in 20 years. Please choose from these 3, which are among your most important personal dreams.**



The third most common dream for the future of the nation is of an economic nature: 27% said that Hungary would have to become economically stronger and more modern. The same number said that the key to Hungary’s future success would be lower corruption. The focus on corruption was particularly evident among those in their twenties and thirties, when compared to their older compatriots.

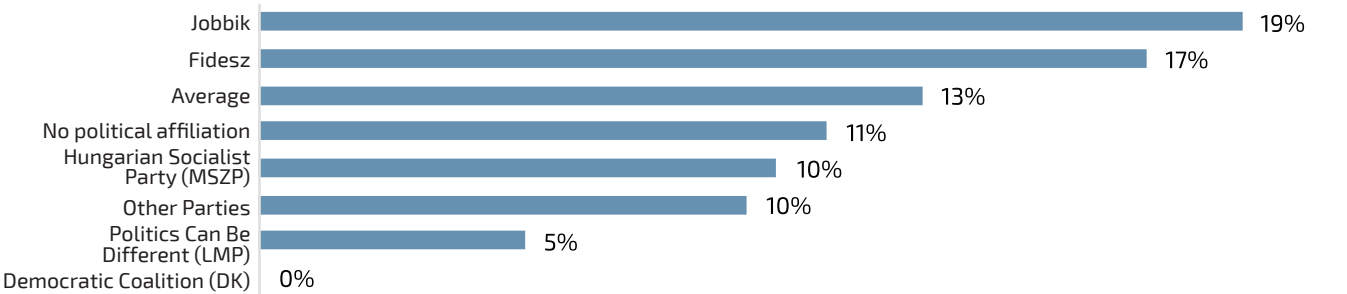
Overcoming the wealth gap is a priority for a quarter of Hungarians, especially for those in their fifties, and was the most popular answer among those who did not complete high school. Almost every fifth respondent said that harmony and solidarity were necessary for the flourishing of the country, and this was particularly popular in Budapest.

A focus on increasing the birth rate was, unsurprisingly, particularly high among voters for the right-wing Fidesz party.

Halting migration is judged necessary for Hungary to flourish particularly among those in their forties. Among all respondents, 13% believe that the Hungarian Dream can only be realised if foreign cultures and religions are prevented from settling in Hungary. When broken down on the basis of party allegiance, we find that every fifth Jobbik voter chose this option, while 17% of Fidesz voters also agreed. By contrast, not a single supporter of the left-liberal Democratic Coalition agreed.

24:  
On the screen you can read about those goals that may be necessary to make Hungary a thriving country in 20 years. Please choose from these 3, which are among your most important personal dreams.

Ensuring that people of other cultures and religions do not settle in Hungary



**Positive thinking as the key to Hungarian success (13%)** was chosen principally by those in their twenties and thirties, while order and security (also 13%) as a prerequisite for future prosperity was chosen particularly by older supporters of the Democratic Coalition. **A similar number chose environmental protection**, which according to Hungarians is one of the three most important issues to confront the country in the future.

**11% judged human rights a particular priority**, with those of higher education levels tending to favour this option, and the difference between the capital and the nation's other regions was particularly marked: 18% of the capital's residents judged human rights important, against just 7% of rural respondents. Voters for the Fidesz government are least likely to judge the preservation of democracy a priority, with just 8% selecting this option, against 22% of Democratic Coalition voters and 24% of Politics Can Be Different voters.

One area where responses differed from our expectations were that extreme-right Jobbik voters did not display a higher-than-average desire (11%) to prioritise the defence of the Hungarian national identity and traditions. **Material questions such as a healthy life, modernisation, democracy and the protection of the environment appear more important to Hungarians than traditionalism.**

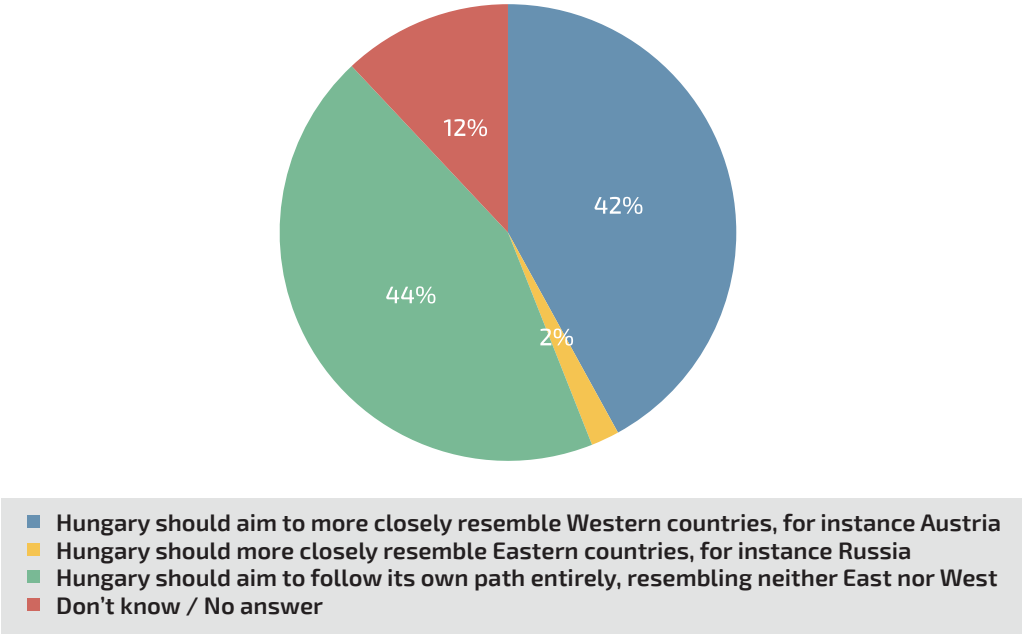
Improving the **education system** (11%) was chosen particularly by those under thirty and those in their forties, perhaps because this youngest group are either still studying or recently completed their studies, while those in their forties are often parents of children in education. Graduates were markedly more likely (17%) to choose this option, while socialists and LMP voters also chose it more frequently than average.

**Only 4% of the population judge the defence of such classically liberal concepts as free market competition and the inviolability of private property as a particular priority. Even less important, however (4%), is the restoration of the pre-1918 borders of Greater Hungary.** Jobbik voters are most likely to view this as a necessity (10%).

From the answers to this point, it is plain that the ‘Hungarian Dream’ differs substantially from the American concepts of self-reliance and a free market, and closer to the values of Western Europe. It is also very different from the self-image of a traditional ‘Eastern European’ society. This is well illustrated by a question asking respondents whether Hungary ought to more closely resemble its western or eastern neighbours, or instead find its own path. Answers show that there is little meaningful support for a more eastward orientation (2%) but that the numbers believing Hungary should find its own path (44%) more or less equalled those who believe the country should more closely resemble Western Europe, (for instance Austria). The ‘Hungarian Way’ is thus very strongly present in the Hungarian imagination, and indeed its supporters slightly outnumber those wishing for a closer alignment with the West.

25:

How do you see the situation of Hungary in the world? Which of the three allegations do you most agree with?

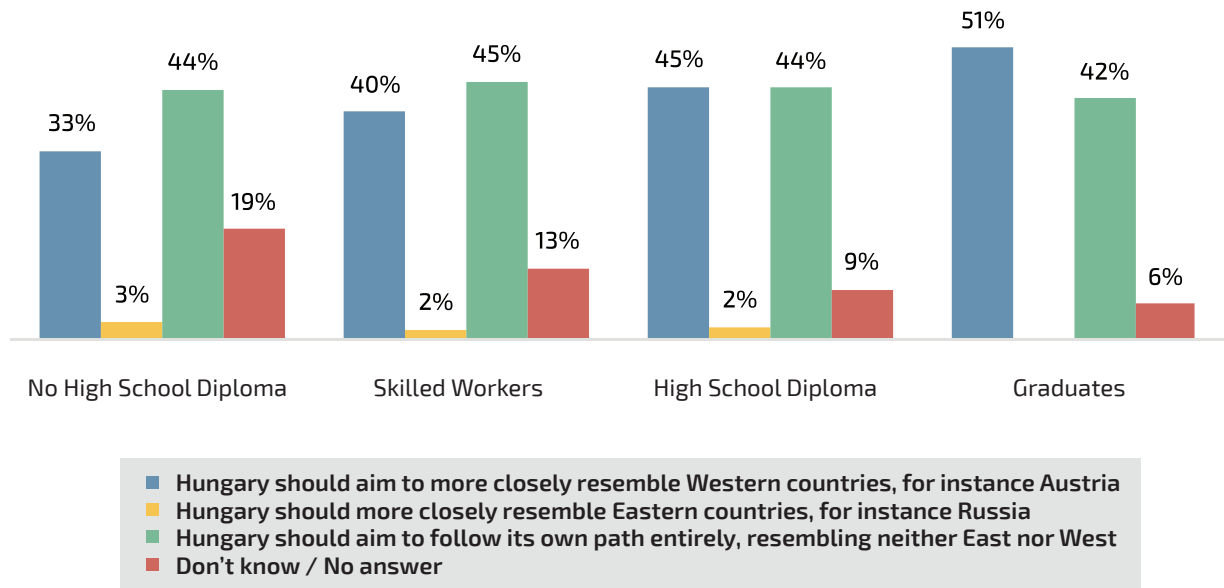


Support for the West is inversely proportional to the age of respondents: Among young adults, **more than half believe that the West should be a model for Hungarian development, but only 36% of those over sixty agree.** Supporters of a separate 'Hungarian Way' number around 40% of those under forty, but around 50% of those over forty.

Support for the West is also correlated with education, with **those most highly educated most likely to say that Hungary should aim to resemble Austria.** While two-thirds of those in the westernmost province of **Western Transdanubia** would prefer a more Austrian life, and more than half of those in neighbouring **Central Transdanubia**, only a third of those in the Southern Great Plains region wish Hungary to more closely resemble Austria. This falls to 29% in the Northern Great Plains, and just 24% of those in Northern Hungary. **Inhabitants of the Northern Great Plains were much more likely than average to wish Hungary to resemble Russia, with 7% of the region's inhabitants choosing Putin's country as an example worth emulating.**

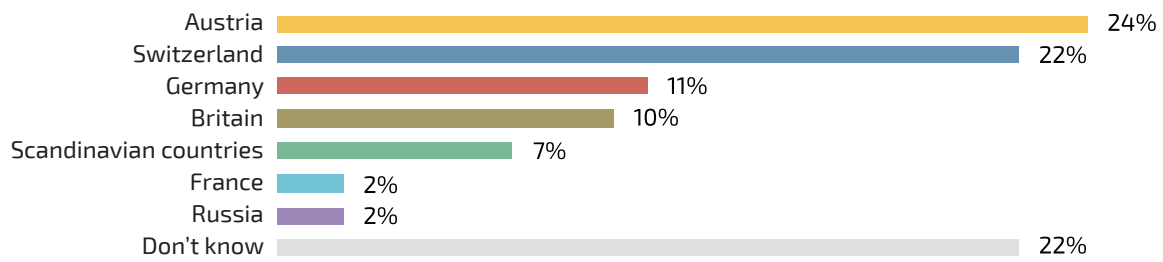
26:

### How do you see the situation of Hungary in the world? Which of the three allegations do you most agree with?



Examining this issue more closely, it becomes apparent that among European countries, the greatest number of Hungarians wish their country to resemble either Austria (24%) or Switzerland (22%). Germany (10%) falls some way behind these two, then come the nations of Scandinavia (10%) and Britain (7%). France and Russia were both chosen by around 2% as the country which Hungary should most closely resemble. It should be stressed that 22% either could not or did not wish to choose any particular country.

27:  
**I now call a few European countries. If Hungary were to resemble another European country, what would you rather have, which one would most closely resemble these countries?**



Austria was chosen most often by young adults (27%) and least often by those over sixty (21%), with a similar ratio for the Scandinavian nations (13% and 8%). Among those in middle age (between 30 and 50) Switzerland is overrepresented, while Britain is the favoured choice of those in their fifties (10%).

Austria is viewed most favourably by skilled professionals, while graduates are most likely to choose Switzerland. Switzerland is generally viewed as a positive example in regional cities (23%) and the countryside (25%) but receives less support in Budapest (14%). In the capital, by contrast, support is high for the Scandinavian countries (15%), which are less popular elsewhere in Hungary (7%). Germany is more popular in regional cities (13%) than in Budapest (9%) or the countryside (8%).

28:

**I now call a few European countries. If Hungary were to resemble another European country, what would you rather have, which one would most closely resemble these countries?**





**Conclusions: This  
is the Hungarian  
Dream**



## 6. Conclusions: This is the Hungarian Dream

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To come closer to defining the Hungarian Dream, Policy Solutions and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung first examined whether Hungarians have such a dream at all; that is, whether long-term goals and aspirations are common in this culture. People imagine their dreams coming true in a wide varieties of ways; there are those who make plans, trusting in themselves, but also those who pray to God and hope for divine assistance. Yet others ask the assistance of the state for achieving their goals. The two institutes were therefore curious as to **which mode of thinking was most prevalent in Hungary**. Hungarians are famous for their pessimism, so it was naturally also important to ask **whether they do indeed hope that their dreams will come true**; that is, do they think a ‘Hungarian Dream’ is achievable?

The results show that **Hungarian society can be divided into three large categories: More or less a third of Hungarians are accustomed to dreaming about their future, while around a quarter used to dream, but no longer do so. A final third or so of respondents were never in the habit of dreaming about the future. In this respect, the age of forty is an important dividing line:** The majority of those under that age have dreams, but as the years go by the habit of dreaming about the future seems to peter out. Among those over forty, fully a third used to dream but gave it up. **The number of those who gave up dreaming is higher among women.** Differences in living standards throughout the country are reflected in dreams: Those most likely to dream are graduates and people living in the developed regions of Western Transdanubia and Central Hungary. In the less-developed region of Southern Transdanubia, by contrast, half the population never had dreams, while the number of those who have given up on their dreams is particularly high in Northern Hungary.

**The nation can also be divided into three groups based on what they do to achieve their dreams: Four in ten Hungarians make plans,** then work to reach their goals. Another quarter – **particularly young people – trust in the assistance of their relatives and friends. A final third either simply hope for a miracle, or else pray** for their dreams to come true.

**Half of Hungarians are to some extent optimistic when it comes to their future,** and prefer to trust that they will achieve their goals. **A third, by contrast, are expressly pessimistic, and do not believe that their dreams will come true.** While every fifth person in the Budapest-dominated region of Central Hungary is completely certain of the fulfilment of their dreams, the same figure in Northern Hungary is just 4%.

To understand the Hungarian Dream and map our images of the future, it is also important to understand **the nation's relationship to its past**. For this reason, during our research we asked people for their views on the past century or so of Hungarian history, from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the post-1989 world. Which one would be viewed as most beneficial to the Hungarian people? We also asked respondents to evaluate the twenty-seven years which have passed since the fall of communism, and state which government they judged most effective. We were also curious whether respondents believed that their parents' lives were better than their own, and whether they thought their children's lives would be better.

**The results show that four in ten Hungarians believe that the pre-1989 Kádár Regime was the best for Hungarians; this was the most popular choice as the closest to a 'golden age.'** The older and less-educated respondents were, the more likely they were to have a positive view on the decades preceding 1989. Support for the previous regime is particularly pronounced in the poorer regions of Northern Hungary and the Eastern Great Plains, as well as in rural areas generally.

**After the Kádár Regime, the most popular choice was 'don't know,' when asked to choose a period they considered the country's 'golden age.'** Those under thirty were particularly unsure in this regard, with over half unable to answer the question. Those under forty were the group which by a very slim majority preferred the post-1989 political system to that before 1989, though this may be because they were not alive before the Iron Curtain fell, or else were very small children. Those saying that the period after 1989 is overall the best for Hungarians made up one fifth of respondents. These were largely graduates, inhabitants of Budapest and/or those under forty. Other historical epochs (the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Horthy Regime and the Rákosi era) were chosen by less than 5% of the overall population.

The relatively low level of support for the post-1989 system is well-reflected in judgements on the governments which have followed that year. **A majority were unable to choose one government from this period: A fifth said that none of them had been good for Hungarians, while a further quarter either could not or did not want to answer the question.** Of the governments of the past twenty-seven years, **the present Orbán government was the most popular choice, with a total of 16%.** Overall, **31% of respondents chose a right-wing (populist) government as the most effective, while 21% chose a left-wing (liberal) government.**

Nostalgia for the Kádár period is shown by **the slightly more positive attitude which Hungarians have for the past, when we ask how they see the lives of their parents' generation.** Among those surveyed, almost a third believed that their parents lived better than themselves, when they were the same age. 28%, meanwhile, believed that their parents' lives had generally been worse. 35% did not believe there had been much change, and that their parents had lived broadly comparable lives when they were the same age as the respondent. These figures

are similar to the answers given **when Hungarians were questioned about their dreams for the future. Here a third of respondents seemed disappointed, a third resigned, and almost a third optimistic.**

The realisation or non-realisation of dreams can have many possible causes in the present; **we can therefore speculate that some outside factor might either help or hinder the actualisation of the Hungarian Dream:** Such factors might include NGOs, the European Union, the government or even one's own family. Among our questions we therefore included some which examined these actors, and asked whether they were generally a help or a hindrance to Hungarians. The fulfilment of dreams is also, naturally, often a question of money, and we also inquired as to how much money they judged necessary to live a happy life.

According to Policy Solutions / FES research, **Hungarians principally (seven in ten) trust in their family and friends to provide help if it is necessary for the fulfilment of their dreams. Half of respondents believe that the Hungarian Dream can only be achieved through the efforts of Hungarian society itself. Among institutions – which lag far behind personal connections – the EU is judged the most helpful for the achievement of dreams.** A fifth of respondents have an expressly positive opinion of the EU.

The low levels of confidence in institutions is shown in the fact that **only 17% of respondents expect help from either the government or NGOs in the fulfilment of their dreams, while this falls to 14% in the case of Hungarian businesses, and only 8% for multinational businesses.** Most, however, express an essentially neutral attitude towards all these institutions. **Generally, open hostility is reserved for the government: four in ten of those surveyed believe that the government actually hinders Hungarians in the achievement of their dreams.** This figure stands at 25% for multinational companies, but even Hungarian businesses are judged harmful by a fifth of respondents.

**According to respondents, the biggest obstacle to the achievement of dreams is low income.** According to Eurostat the median monthly net income was 124,000 forints in 2016, with a mean monthly net income of 192,000. In this regard, **Hungarians do not just lag significantly behind Western European norms in actual earnings, but also in their financial dreams:** Only 12% of respondents said that an income of more than 500,000 forints would be necessary for them to live their dream. 28% of Hungarians said that an income of between 300,000 and 500,000 forints would be sufficient for their dreams, while 36% said that an income of between 200,00 and 300,000 would suffice. **Three quarters thus Hungarians thus chose a figure significantly higher than either the mean or median monthly income as necessary for the fulfilment of their dreams.**

By evaluating the past and the present, we can better understand what Hungarians dream of, what the Hungarian Dream is. Naturally there are divergences between one's personal dreams and one's visions for the nation, but in

both instances people taking part in our research were able to choose between dozens of options. In order to give a more accurate impression of public opinion regarding the future direction of the country, we offered respondents a choice between moving politically westward or eastward, or of going its own way, and also asked whether the country should more closely resemble Britain, Austria, Switzerland and other Western European countries (or Eastern European, in the case of Russia). Finally, we attempted to measure the level of Hungarian optimism toward the future.

From this research, it appears that **the most important personal desire of Hungarians is a healthy life**. Among respondents this option was chosen by the greatest number (56%) when asked what their most important personal dream was. **After health, the most common response was a stable and secure income and pension to live on**, which was chosen by every second Hungarian. The number of people choosing this option was highest among those over sixty, which is also true for the first option of a healthy life. It is interesting to note that **there is no statistical correlation between level of education and desire for a secure livelihood; from those without a high school leaving diploma up to graduates, we find this desire for financial security at roughly equal levels**. A happy marriage or partnership, and dreams of a family life (chosen by 42% of respondents) correlated strongly with age: The younger a respondent, the more likely he or she was to choose dreams of a happy private life as paramount.

The **safety of their children and grandchildren** first becomes a priority among those in their fifties, with 53% of this age group choosing this option. This is also a priority of around half of all respondents, however. A **safe working environment and good working conditions** were most often chosen by young adults.

**Young people are also significantly more likely to dream of a beautiful, spacious apartment, foreign holidays, jobs abroad and foreign language acquisition. A particularly important piece of data is that every fifth young person chose 'moving abroad' as one of their most important dreams**. Regionally speaking, dreams of emigration are most popular in the country's poorest region, Northern Hungary. Interestingly, those in their fifties were most likely to choose the dream of 'starting your own business or NGO.' It is perhaps surprising that **those over sixty were most likely to choose 'helping our homeland and doing something for the prosperity of Hungary' (though this is still only 5%), in contrast to the less patriotically-minded respondents in their thirties, of whom only 1% dreamed of doing something for Hungary's benefit**.

Beyond personal dreams, we also examined people's expectations for the future of the country, being curious as to what our compatriots thought necessary in order for Hungary to be a flourishing country in twenty years' time.

According to respondents, the most important necessity for Hungary to become a flourishing country was a substantial increase in pay and pensions. This option was chosen by more than half of those questioned. The second most-chosen option for a successful Hungarian future was an improvement in the nation's healthcare system, which was selected by every third respondent. The third most common dream for the future of the nation is of an economic nature: 27% said that Hungary would have to become economically stronger and more modern. The same number said that the key to Hungary's future success would be lower corruption. Overcoming the wealth gap is a priority for a quarter of Hungarians, especially for those in their fifties, and was the most popular answer among those who did not graduate from high school.

Almost every fifth respondent said that harmony and solidarity were necessary for the flourishing of the country. Halting migration is judged necessary for Hungary to flourish particularly among those in their forties. Among all respondents, 13% believe that the Hungarian Dream can only be realised if foreign cultures and religions are prevented from settling in Hungary. Only 4% of the population judge the defence of such classically liberal concepts as free market competition and the inviolability of private property as a particular priority. Even less important, however (4%), is the restoration of the pre-1918 borders of Greater Hungary.

From these responses, it is plain that the 'Hungarian Dream' differs substantially from the American concepts of self-reliance and a free market, and closer to the values of Western Europe. It is also very different from the self-image of a traditional 'Eastern' society. This is well shown by a question asking respondents whether Hungary ought to more closely resemble its western or eastern neighbours, or should find its own path. Answers show that there is little meaningful support for a more eastward orientation (2%) but that the numbers believing Hungary should find its own path (44%) more or less equalled those who believe the country should more closely resemble Western Europe (for instance Austria). The 'Hungarian Way' is thus very strongly present in the Hungarian imagination, and indeed its supporters slightly outnumber those wishing for a closer alignment with the West.

Examining this issue more closely, it becomes apparent that among European countries, the greatest number of Hungarians wish their country to resemble either Austria (24%) or Switzerland (22%). Germany (10%) falls some way behind these two, then come the nations of Scandinavia (10%) and Britain (7%). France and Russia were both chosen by around 2% as the country which Hungary should most closely resemble. It should be stressed that 22% either could not or did not wish to choose any particular country.

So what is the Hungarian Dream? Hungarians dream primarily of material prosperity and good health, which they wish to achieve through a combination of western and traditionally Hungarian values.

Economic development, prosperity, decreasing the wealth gap and lowering corruption; we can see that such **practical, material questions take precedence over all others**. Beyond having more money in their pockets, **Hungarians primarily desire an improved healthcare system**. Hungarians seem primarily concerned with their own personal income and security, **rather than with the destiny of the entire nation**.

Generally, Hungarians prefer to **place their trust in their narrow circle of personal relationships**, rather than in institutions. This means, of course, that **the family becomes extremely important**: Young people desire a balanced relationship, while older people hope for security for their children and grandchildren. **The connection to nature and desire to protect the environment** are among the few post-material values strongly evident in society. Another is travel and emigration: Every fifth young person imagines achieving his or her dreams abroad, and on every societal level the **possibility of travel** is chosen as an important dream.

**Hungarians, then, do not seem much enamoured of unrestricted free markets or the idea of a multicultural society. At the same time, traditional ideas of nationalism or a return to the borders of pre-1918 Greater Hungary leave the vast majority equally cold.** The dreams of Hungarians generally seem as far from the American ideal of **free self-actualisation** as from the Russian vision of a **strong state that keeps order**. To summarise the Hungarian Dream, we might say that **Hungarians would prefer to be located eight hundred kilometres or so to the west, somewhere on the Austrian-Swiss border, with all the certainties of the communist Kádár Regime, but with a Western European quality of life.**



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