

Top ten Social Issues Among Youth

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The Hungarian Youth Research Institute published its new book, *Kívánj tized!*, which includes several papers on the self-reflection among Hungarian youth and how they see their future. The book is segmented into 10 main parts addressing the challenges youth face today.

“In your opinion, what is the most aggravating problem for youth?” asked the Youth Research Institute in its survey of young Hungarians aged 15-29. Each chapter focused on a single challenge, presenting both a Hungarian and an international perspective on the survey’s results. Some chapters explored materialistic issues such as homelessness and housing problems, while others explored less tangible topics concerning the mental and social perceptions of youth, such as uncertainty and aimlessness.

(1) The most pressing challenge for youth has become uncertainty and the unpredictable future. In recent years, this particular problem steadily climbed the ranks in the top ten until it eventually claimed first place. Levente Székely outlined this topic while analyzing data from a large sample youth survey. It appears that Hungarian youth view their own future optimistically, yet they hold a more negative view toward their own generation’s outlook. Uncertainty plays a significant role in our daily lives, intensified by manipulative news in the media. Regarding the uncertainty about the future, youth see solutions in strengthening family connections and improving their financial situations.

(2) Worldwide, the youth seem to be facing a challenging situation concerning poverty, particularly as they depleted much of their emergency funds and even lost their jobs during

the pandemic. Tamás Isépy, Képíróné Judit Huber, and Péter Koncz examined the second most pressing problem among Hungarian youth: material hardships and poverty. Despite youth being notably sensitive to sudden environmental changes, most Hungarian young people appear to be relatively far from poverty altogether.

(3) Dávid Kollár and Péter Pillók examined the third most pressing problem, aimlessness. They constructed two models to address this issue, considering young people who were goal-oriented. Hungarian youth who responded positively to having clear aims in their lives seemed to have more structured expectations and their decision-making abilities were more creative and authentic. Conversely, when these elements were absent from their lives, they tended to feel a sense of aimlessness.

(4) Hungarian youth appears to experience increased loneliness with fewer social connections, which was intensified by the impact of the pandemic. László Grúz and Balázs Fekete delved into the fourth problem: the deterioration of social lives and communities among youth. They highlighted the numerous positive effects that social relationships can have on individuals. Considering that the younger generation spends an average of six hours a day online, (sometimes even doubling that duration) social media has the potential for both positive and negative impacts on the lives of youth, simultaneously connecting and isolating them from each other.

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(5) Petra Arnold investigated the fifth most burning issue: alcohol and drug use among young people. Her research also focused on the decline in heavy alcohol consumption post-2011. It was found that Hungarian youth are drinking less frequently but consuming larger portions compared to previous years. In contrast to other nations, young Hungarians exhibit more intense alcohol consumption while their drug use is comparatively less severe. The author of the paper concludes that more emphasis on healthy lifestyles, stricter parental control, and reduced real-life interactions significantly contribute to the decline in alcohol and drug consumption among youth.

(6) Katalin Bördös and Luca Koltai delved into the sixth most critical problem: the labor market, where the youth demographic stands as one of the most vulnerable groups. They highlighted how a young person's family or social background often limits their opportunities. Youth are at a higher risk of inactivity, unemployment, and engaging in non-traditional employment. The authors suggest that solutions might involve raising wages or organizing job training programs that are inclusive (even for disadvantaged young individuals).

(7) Andrea Rosta researched the seventh most critical problem: crime, which can originate from various causes — be it personal, social, or economic factors. Since 2010, young Hungarians have been involved in fewer criminal activities, with theft being the most common encounter with the law. The author suggests that while the primary focus should be on educating young individuals for positive behavior, the justice system lacks the necessary tools for this task. There is a need for new tools, institutions, alternative approaches, professionals, and training within the justice system to address these challenges effectively.

(8) Balázs János Kocsis researched the eighth

most critical problem: housing problems. In recent years, Hungarian youth in the housing market have shown limited housing mobility, and the prices of apartments / houses tends to be high, especially in Budapest and larger cities. "Those in the age range of having children tend to have homes that are, on average, small and have fewer rooms," and among these individuals, "young people make up the highest proportion of renters, which stands at 27 percent." There is only a small portion of young Hungarians, mostly living in bigger cities, who do not want to own an apartment or house.

(9) Ágnes Engler and Gabriella Pusztai delved into the ninth most critical problem, which was family life. For Hungarian young people, family holds significant importance. However, in recent years, uncertainties have arisen around relationships and planning for children due to various factors. These factors include the decline in marriage and family planning, the breakdown of family structures, and common anxieties in the lives of youth. The authors propose supporting small communities and implementing public family allowances as potential solutions.

(10) Georgina Kiss-Kozma and Tamás Ruff examined emigration in the final chapter. Young people typically represent the most mobile age group; although the majority of young Hungarians do not currently have migration plans, they are most likely to consider it in the future. One of the primary influences on young people's opinions and plans is their own and their acquaintances' past experiences with emigration. Hungary witnessed a significant wave of emigration until 2015, but in the subsequent years, there was an increasing number of migrations both into and out of the country.

Péter Pillók – Levente Székely: Kívánj tizedt! A magyarországi fiatalok nemzedéki önreflexiója és jövőképe. Budapest: National Youth Council of Hungary, 2022