

# Should I Stay or Should I go? Migration Potential Among Hungarian Youth

Georgina Kiss-Kozma<sup>1</sup> & Tamás Ruff<sup>2</sup>

In our study, we examine the emigration intention of young people in Hungary using the last dataset of the Hungarian youth sociology research project, the Hungarian large sample youth survey. Over the course of the research, 8,000 young Hungarians between the ages of 15 and 29 were interviewed; the questionnaire also included questions about moving abroad. The Hungarian large sample youth survey was launched in 2000 and was repeated every four years thereafter. The target group of the survey was young people living in Hungary. Given the target group, the research lacks input from Hungarian young people who have left the country for a shorter or longer period time, meaning that the underlying reasons for migrating abroad cannot be examined using this dataset.

**Keywords:** youth, migration, Hungary, large-sample surveys

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## 1. Introduction

In the first part of the study, we briefly review the theoretical and methodological dilemmas that challenge researchers investigating the extent of migration and its characterization; then we take a domestic look at Hungary to review the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on youth migration. The decision to migrate is always the result of a complex process, influenced by exogenous factors in addition to the individual's personal situation. The future appears increasingly unpredictable to young people, and as a result, we can assume that young people's expectations regarding the future may become more and more important for their migration plans. In the 2020 wave of the Hungarian large sample youth survey, respondents were asked how concerned they are of certain events happening; based on these answers, we examined how uncertainty and fears about the future affect the migration potential of young people in Hungary in the final section of this study.

To understand and interpret the international mobility of young people, it is also necessary to explore driving forces behind migration plans, as various motivations result in different social impacts. For example, young people may go abroad to gain experience or because they see it as an escape route. According to the data of the Hungarian large sample youth survey, Hungarian youth do not see emigration as a pressing problem; in their opinion, the issue ranks last on the ranking of the most important problems related to their generation. They often go abroad in order to gain experience, to lay a solid foundation for a secure financial future, or to broaden their horizons, and therefore expect a positive impact from their decision to migrate. At the same time, in the country of origin the issue of youth emigration receives particular attention from social, demographic, and economic points of view, as it can have a decisive, even negative impact on these processes. In

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connection with the emigration of youth, we can observe a conflict of individual and social interests, although both sides can benefit from return migration.

Migratory processes include at least two components, which can be analysed most generally by comparing the number of immigrant foreign citizens and emigrant domestic citizens based on national and international statistics (Gazsó, 2020:358). According to Mishra (1981:227-228), migration can be defined as an inflow or outflow of population from a defined region to another region for permanent or semi-permanent settlement. In this paper, we focus on emigration within this two-way process. Due to the intensification of the emigration process since the early 2010s, the main questions have focused not only on the insufficiency of the statistical system related to migration, but also on the number of migrants, their socio-demographic background and the drivers of emigration (cf. Blaskó, 2012; Gödri, 2013; Hárs, 2012, 2013; Gödri et al., 2014; Gödri, 2015; Hárs, 2016, Kapitány & Rohr, 2014; Blaskó & Gödri, 2014; Hárs & Simon, 2016). At the same time, due to the intensification of the wave of refugee migration<sup>3</sup> in the mid-2010s, the topic of immigration has experienced a renaissance again (cf. Bernát et al., 2015; Sik et al., 2016; Sik & Szeitl, 2016.; Barna & Koltai, 2018; Bernát et al., 2019). However, it is important to underline that it has become increasingly relevant to examine other forms of migration, such as return migration or circulation, which can no longer be considered atypical. Research on this topic has been published in recent years (cf. Hegedűs et al., 2017; Siskáné & Halász, 2018; Kajdi et al., 2019; Gábrriel & Horváth, 2020), although there remains a lack of empirical data, especially large sample, representative surveys.

## 2. Theoretical and methodological challenges in migration research

### Conceptual distinctions

Although migration is as old as humanity (Szalayné, 2009), different social processes lie behind this phenomenon in various historical periods and these transformations also have different social, economic and political consequences. In addition, spatial movements of people may be subject to different social perceptions depending on age and geographical location. Simultaneously with the appearance of migration in modern times, international literature on this phenomenon was born. The intensification of emigration to America from the second half of the 19th century aroused the interest of European decision-makers and researchers, leading to the emergence of parallel and often competing research approaches (Szabó, 2006:65). Migration research in Western Europe was launched in the 1990s, marked by the end of the bipolar world order, and was stimulated by concerns about East-West migration. Besides regime changes in Central and Eastern European countries, cross-border mobility was also catalysed by the expansion of the European Union and the free movement of labour, and migratory processes were further strengthened by economic and income differences between countries (Gödri, 2016; Ruff, 2022). The migration decision is always the consequence of a complex process, influenced not only by the individual life situation but also

<sup>3</sup> As Ruff (2022) states, research on migration in Hungary from the late 1980s until the full opening of the EU labour market in 2011 focused primarily on immigration.

by exogenous factors. The intensity of the subsequent waves of emigration were shaped not only by the expansion of the European Labour Market<sup>4</sup> but also by factors such as the global economic crisis.

Migration is fundamentally an individual act, which develops into a social phenomenon due to its volume and extent (Hautzinger et al., 2014:18). The development of literature on migration is reflected in international scientific discourse, and it is typical that many theories compete with each other. Since there is no integrated, comprehensive theory of migration that can be used to easily understand this social phenomenon, a multidisciplinary approach is needed to analyse migration flows (Masey et al., 2012). Although opinions are also divided on which types of human movement can be included in the concept of migration, interpretations focus on human behaviour<sup>5</sup>, i.e. change of residence (Hautzinger et al., 2014: 5).

The main theoretical discourses on the concepts highlight different characteristics of migration. Migrants are not a homogeneous group, and there are a vast number of attempts at sociologically characterising migration flows (cf. Lőrincz et al., 2012.; L. Rédei, 2001; Bába, 2008; Halász, 2011; Szalkai, 2010; Sik, 1992; Tóth, 2001; Illés et al., 2009). Migration can be approached in several ways, and although in practice we can rarely talk about sharply distinct types, the main aspects of various migration classifications usually include spatial aspects (state border), purpose of arrival, legality and intended duration of stay. The term 'migration' has various shades of meaning (Trewartha 1969: 136.) Based on this, we can talk about internal or international migration, immigration or emigration, its voluntary or involuntary nature, permanent or semi-permanent change of residence, economic, political, cultural or ecological migration, as well as legal or illegal migration (Hautzinger et al., 2014).

Another difficult question relates to who should officially be considered a migrant? Or, in a more restricted sense, who can be considered a young migrant? The answer to this question also determines the results of the examination of migration to a substantial extent. The Hungarian Central Statistical Office investigated the effects of young people's international migration<sup>6</sup> between 2017 and 2019 and devoted a separate chapter to clarifying various terms in its research report, since both the concepts of 'young' and 'migrant' can be contradictory (Fassmann et al., 2018:11-16).

In the case of international migration, spatial movements of people generally refer to the longer-term relocation of individuals' main place of usual residence, i.e., the two defining features of international migration are spatial distance (length of distance) and intended duration of time (length of time). Most scholarly definitions of international migration include these two variables, but they differ significantly in their specific use. As for the spatial distance approach, international migration involves the crossing of political boundaries (for instance country line, state line, international border) (Week, 1989:186-214; Fassmann et al., 2018:11.). However, how long a person must live in another country in order to be considered an emigrant varies from country to country. Short-term and long-term migration have very different consequences, so as a first step, these

<sup>4</sup> Citizens of new member states, including Hungary, were allowed access to EU labour markets. For example, Germany and Austria opened their markets in 2011. These two countries rank high in the destination ranking of emigrants.

<sup>5</sup> It is an undecided question what kinds of spatial mobility may be regarded as migration, whether migration should include short-term migration or emigration of longer but limited duration and with well-defined purposes (recreation, holiday, tourism, visits to friends or relatives, education, business, medical treatment, religious pilgrimage, diplomacy, missions, or even law enforcement or peacekeeping, etc.).

<sup>6</sup> YOUMIG - Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration.

two types of migration may be distinguished. The 1998 United Nations (UN) Recommendation on Statistics of International Migration states that a long-term international migrant is “a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months)”.<sup>7</sup> As short-term international movements of people for purposes other than tourism are an important characteristic of international population mobility, the UN also recognized the importance of collecting information on persons who move to a country other than their usual country of residence for under a year (Fassmann et al., 2018:11-16). For this reason, a category of short-term international migrants has also been introduced, which includes “a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least 3 months but less than a year (12 months) except in cases where the movement to that country is for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage”.<sup>8</sup>

Based on the nature and degree of permanence of the movements, we can talk about short-term, temporary migration and temporary but fixed-term stay. Furthermore, we can distinguish between permanent, settlement (with indefinite stay) and returning home after a prolonged absence (Tóth, 2001:83). In addition, a distinction can be made between completed, permanent, or indefinite migrations and incomplete, i.e., temporary or fixed-term migrations (Hautzinger et al., 2014:14-15). Questions related to migration are also evolving with the development of the volume and structure of migration, as well as through changes in the external political, social, and economic context. In recent decades, globalization, economic crises, epidemics and wars have been constantly shaping the intensity of migration. Thanks to this, in addition to settlement, circulation is also becoming an increasingly important form of spatial movements of people. Circulation refers to a repetition of legal migration by the same person between two or more countries. It includes seasonal migration related to agricultural, construction or mass tourism and commuter migration (resulting from cross-border labour movements), as well as leisure, vocational or shopping tourism (Illés & Kincses, 2009:731–732).

## Methodological background of the analysis

There is no consensus in the literature regarding the conceptual definition and theoretical approaches of migration, and as a result, the development of the sampling frame faces methodological difficulties (Várhalmi & Kováts, 2014:9-10). In addition to the diversity of conceptual and theoretical approaches to migration, the focus of the interpretations is on specific human behaviour, i.e., migration (change of residence) (Hautzinger et al., 2014:18). Migration can be examined from different aspects. For example, our examination can relate to the present (current residence abroad), the past (foreign experience, migration trends) and the future (migration potential, migration plans). For different approaches, various statistical sources, databases, and research results can be used.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations (1998): Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration. Revision 1, Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 58. pp.10.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

In identifying and analysing the emigration process, we can rely on administrative records and empirical research. However, methodological difficulties can be identified in both cases. In the case of administrative records, data may come from domestic registers and foreign mirror statistics (e.g., Eurostat, Destatis, Statistik Austria, etc.). Another difficulty in measuring emigration is that emigrants are not adequately represented in official statistics, since the databases only account for emigrants who have reported their departure to the authorities. Therefore, registers covering the target population are fundamentally lacking (Várhalmi & Kováts, 2014; Ruff, 2013:152-153). The estimation of emigration is mainly based on statistics from administrative data sources such as health insurance registers, tax registers, population registers, registers of foreigners, registers of residence or work permits, empirical research and labour force surveys, e.g. the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) (KSH: Migration of Hungarians according to statistics).<sup>9</sup> Another complicating circumstance is that population surveys in the countries of origin do not reach those persons who have moved abroad together with their entire household.

In our paper, we examine the emigration intention of the young people in Hungary using the last dataset of the Hungarian youth sociology research project, the Hungarian large sample youth survey. Over the course of the research, 8,000 young Hungarians between the ages of 15 and 29 were interviewed between 2000 and 2020; the questionnaire also included questions about moving abroad. The Hungarian large sample youth survey was launched in 2000 and was repeated every four years thereafter. The target group of the survey was young people living in Hungary.

Based on the results of the large-scale youth research, we can examine the mobility willingness of young people in Hungary, the drivers of migration, i.e., the intentions and motives of relocating young people using the explanatory power of the push-and-pull neoclassical migration model, described by one of its leading proponents, the Anglo-German geographer and soldier Ernest George Ravenstein. The theory is based on the idea of push and pull factors driving a potential migrant to consider leaving their country of residence and moving abroad. Push factors are circumstances that make it unattractive for a person to live in a certain country, while potential migrants are encouraged to emigrate by pull factors in the country of destination that they consider attractive. The theoretical basis of the model states that the volume and direction of migration are fundamentally determined by these components (Hautzinger et al., 2014:24-25; cf. Grigg, 1977). Migration decisions are influenced by several factors: micro-level decisions taken after balancing the benefits and costs of migration, which are also determined by individual goals, life situations and circumstances and the macro-structural environment. Furthermore, potential factors that are relevant for decision-making include the differences between the country of origin and the potential destination country, for instance labour market differences; demographic, social, political structural differences; cultural, linguistic, or geographical factors; the nature of historically determined interstate relationships; or the host country's migration regulations (Gödri, 2016; Ruff, 2022).

International migration is a complex, contextual and multidimensional process, several aspects of which have already been analysed in Hungarian migration research, but there are questions that neither micro-level nor macro-level approaches can adequately answer. For example, how can we

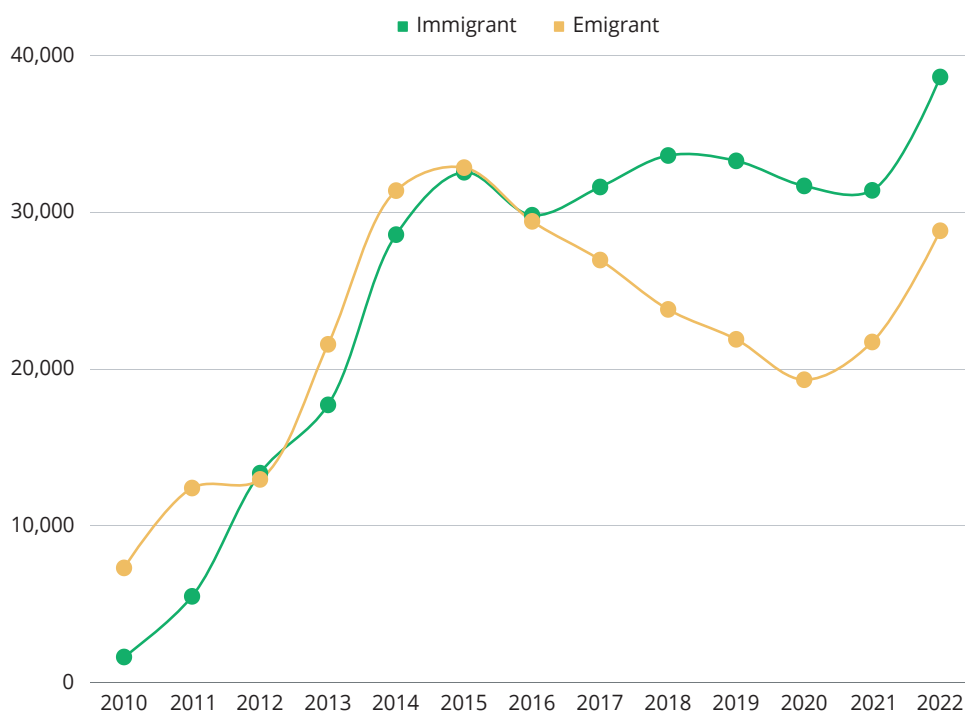
<sup>9</sup> [https://www.ksh.hu/sajtoszoba\\_kozlemenyek\\_tajekoztatok\\_2017\\_03\\_02](https://www.ksh.hu/sajtoszoba_kozlemenyek_tajekoztatok_2017_03_02)

explain the fact that, despite similar economic, social, cultural and political circumstances and similar socio-demographic backgrounds, some people decide to emigrate, while others prefer to stay at home? These cases of migration can be analysed based on the migrant network theory. Migrant social capital differentially influences the migration decision depending on its level, diversity, and accessibility (Kiss-Kozma, 2022).

### 3. Hungarian citizens' international migration

Methodological difficulties make it necessary to proceed with caution when analysing statistical data on emigration, or when estimating the exact size of emigration for example. However, the trend emerging from the data of Hungarian administrative registers (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, STADAT tables) shows that from 2010 the number of Hungarian citizens spending at least one year abroad increased exponentially until 2015 (from 7,000 young people in 2010 to 33,000 in 2015), which is due to the opening of the labour market in Western European countries on the one hand, and the effects of the global economic crisis on the other. However, in 2016, the growing trend of emigration, observed from the beginning of the decade, was reversed and since then, more Hungarian citizens have been immigrating to Hungary than emigrating. Between 2019 and 2021, more Hungarian citizens moved home than emigrated. Data for 2021 and 2022 are less in line with the previous trend, as the number of Hungarian citizens emigrating has increased again (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

**Figure 1. Number of immigrating and emigrating Hungarian citizens, 2010-2022**

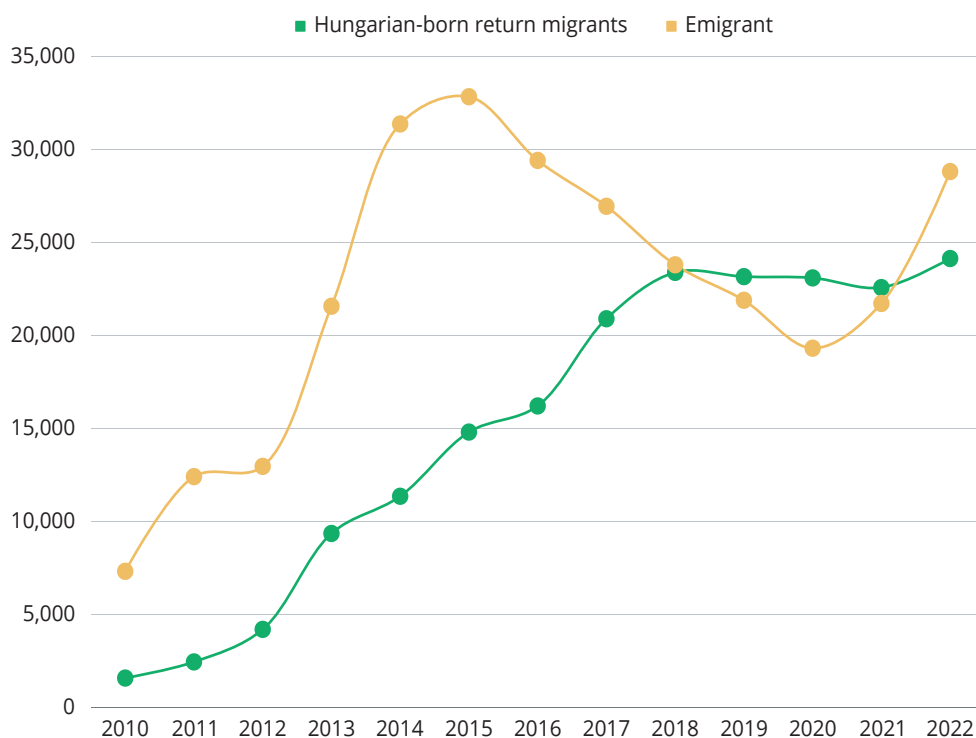


Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, [https://www.ksh.hu/stadat\\_files/nep/en/nep0030.html](https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/nep/en/nep0030.html)



In 2022, 45 percent of emigrating Hungarians chose Austria, 25 percent Germany, and 4 percent the United Kingdom as their destination country (Figure 3). While the proportion of emigrants to Austria increased compared to previous years, the proportion of emigrants to the UK and Germany decreased. 41 percent of returnees moved back from Austria, 27 percent from Germany and 12 percent from the UK in the same year (Figure 4). While the proportion of returnees from the UK and Germany decreased, the proportion of returnees from Austria increased significantly. International mobility is more pronounced among the younger age group: two-thirds of emigrating Hungarians are under the age of 40 and four tenths are under the age of 30. More than half of return migrants are under the age of 40, while more than a quarter are under the age of 30 (KSH: Magyarország, 2022).

**Figure 2. Number of returning and emigrating Hungarian citizens, 2010-2022**

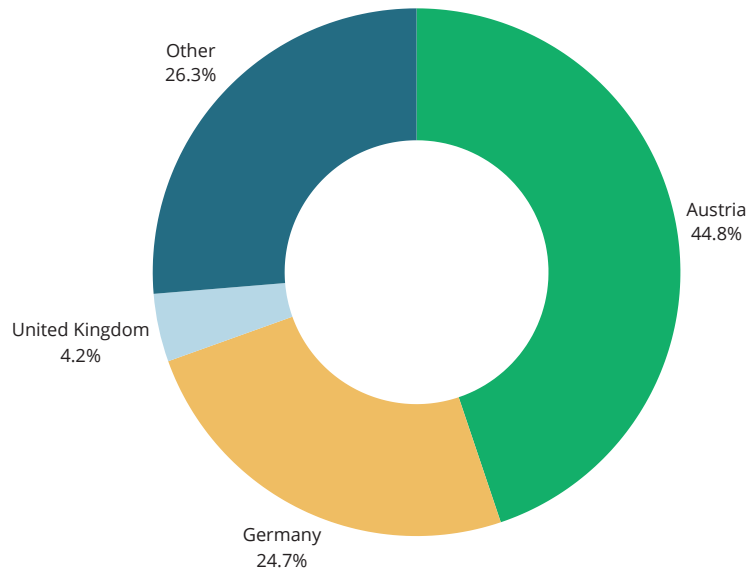


Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, [https://www.ksh.hu/stadat\\_files/nep/en/nep0030.html](https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/nep/en/nep0030.html)

An analysis of the number of young Hungarians aged 15-29 living in European countries shows that Germany and Austria have the highest numbers of young Hungarians (Figure 5).<sup>10</sup> Their numbers have been gradually increasing over the last ten years, with a higher growth rate in Germany, but in contrast to Austria, the number of young Hungarians living in Germany has been falling since 2018. A similar slow increase as in Austria can be observed in the Netherlands, where there are fewer young people of Hungarian nationality than in the previous two countries. Looking at the other European countries, Switzerland has almost the same number of young Hungarians as the Netherlands, and Denmark has become slightly more attractive in recent years.

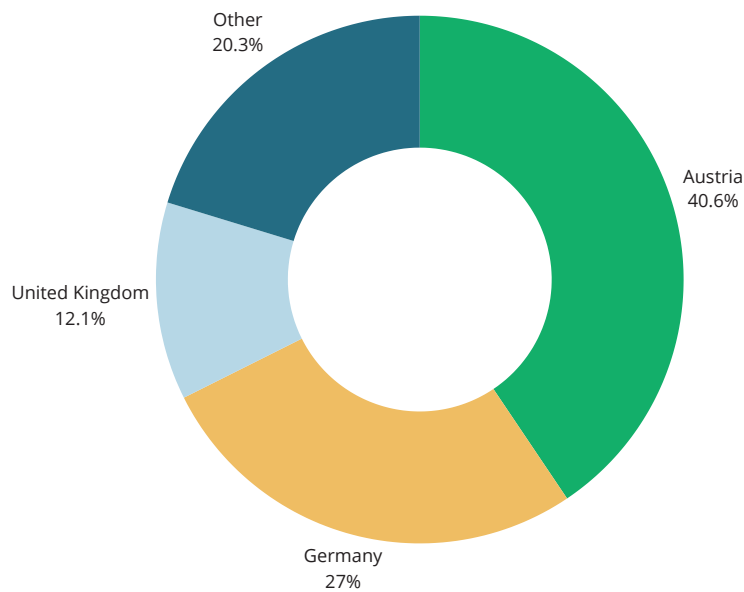
<sup>10</sup> Eurostat includes those who have lived continuously in the country for at least 12 months before the reference period or who arrived in the country during the 12 months before the reference period with the intention of staying for at least one year. Data for the 15-29-year-old age group living in the UK are not available from Eurostat.

**Figure 3. Distribution of emigrating Hungarian citizens by country of destination, 2022**



Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, [https://www.ksh.hu/stadat\\_files/nep/en/nep0031.html](https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/nep/en/nep0031.html)

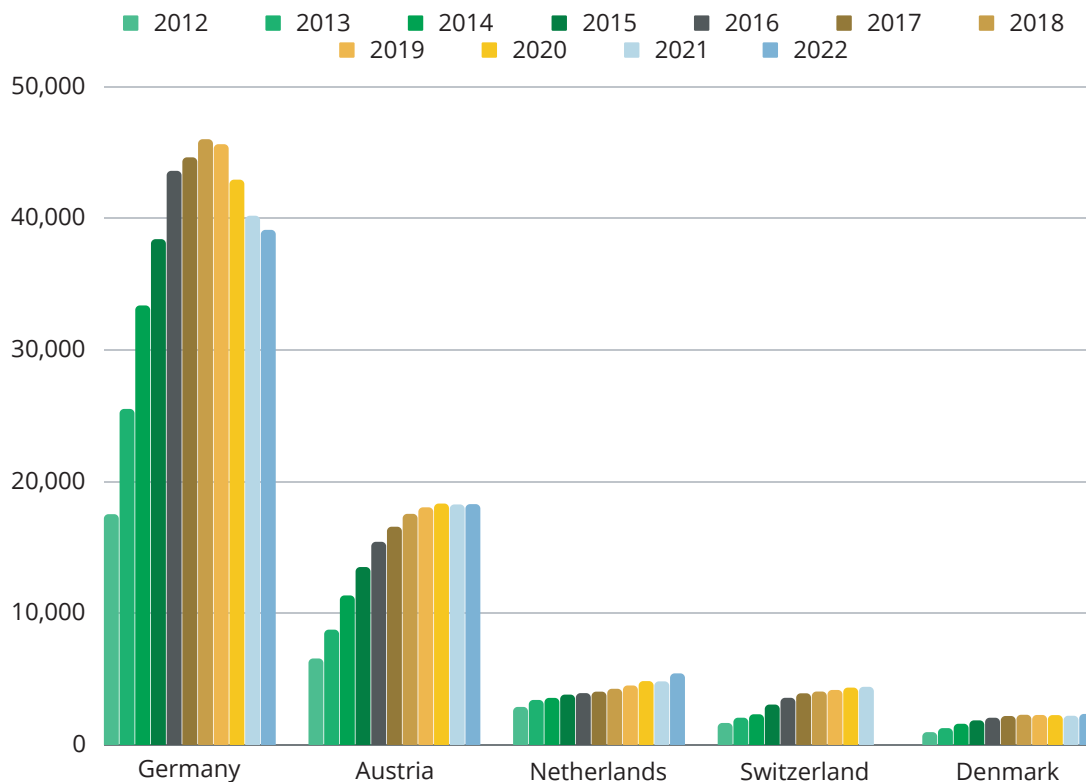
**Figure 4. Distribution of returning Hungarian-born Hungarian citizens by previous country of residence, 2022**



Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, [https://www.ksh.hu/stadat\\_files/nep/en/nep0032.html](https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/nep/en/nep0032.html)



**Figure 5. Number of Hungarian citizens aged 15-29 living in various countries**



Source: Eurostat (online data code: MIGR\_POP1CTZ)

## 4. Results of the Hungarian large-sample youth survey

### Motivations and barriers of international migration for young Hungarian people

There are many factors that can drive mobility abroad, and it is important to understand these to get a clear picture of the reasons why young people leave the country for longer or shorter periods.

The analysis of incentives and disincentives first appeared in the Youth 2008 survey. In 2008, most people would have gone abroad to work to earn some money to save (18 percent), to gain experience (4 percent), to learn a language (3 percent) or because they could have a better quality of life abroad (3 percent).

In the next three data collections, most of the questions relating to motivations were asked in the same way, so they can be compared.<sup>11</sup> As in the previous two surveys, in 2020 the main reason given by young people for migrating was to earn a better living. Compared to the data from the

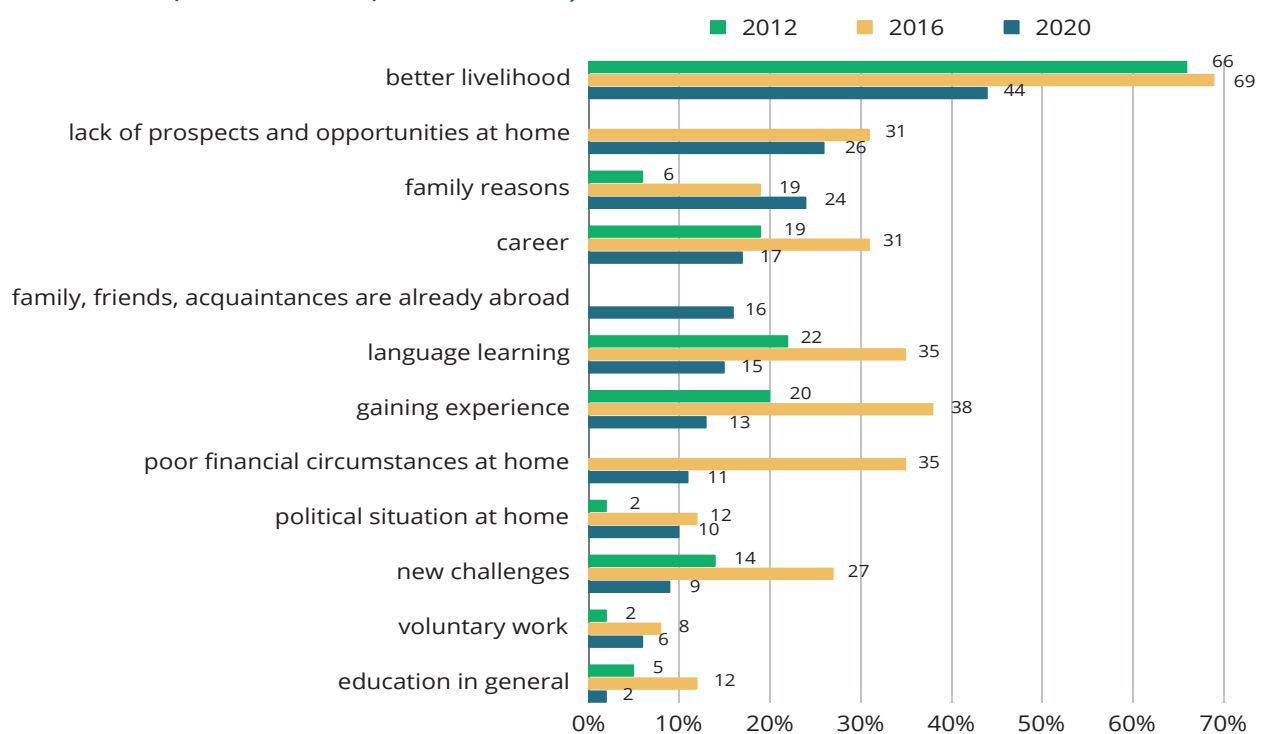
<sup>11</sup> For three answer options, we can only present data from 2016 and/or 2020.

previous two surveys, there is a marked difference in this respect. Previously, two-thirds of young Hungarians said they would leave the country to improve their standard of living, but this proportion has now decreased to 44 percent. The proportion of young people who would go abroad to learn a language or to gain experience has also decreased, with a big change in these two areas compared to the previous survey in 2016. In 2020, career development was the fourth reason for mobility abroad, which is almost identical to the findings of research conducted eight years ago (Figure 6).

The proportion of emigrants seeking new challenges and looking to overcome poor financial conditions at home has decreased significantly compared to four years ago, and fewer would leave for another country because of the lack of prospects and opportunities at home. The proportion of those who would leave the country for learning purposes only – for example because there is no training in Hungary they are interested in or because they think there are more learning opportunities abroad – was lowest in 2020 of the last three surveys. One-tenth of young people would leave the country because of the political situation and 6 percent are interested in volunteering abroad.

Compared to previous years, moving to another country due to reasons related to family are up as the proportion of young people has increased in this category. This change may also be explained by the fact that 16 percent of young people already have family members, friends or acquaintances abroad.

**Figure 6. Motivations for mobility abroad**  
(N2012 =8000, N2016 =1995, N2020 =2000)



Overall, the order of motivations for mobility has changed, with the latest results showing that young people aged 15-29 would leave the country primarily to gain better livelihoods, secondly for family-related reasons, and thirdly for career-related reasons. Learning a language and gaining experience were ranked lower, although they were ranked second and third in the two previous surveys.

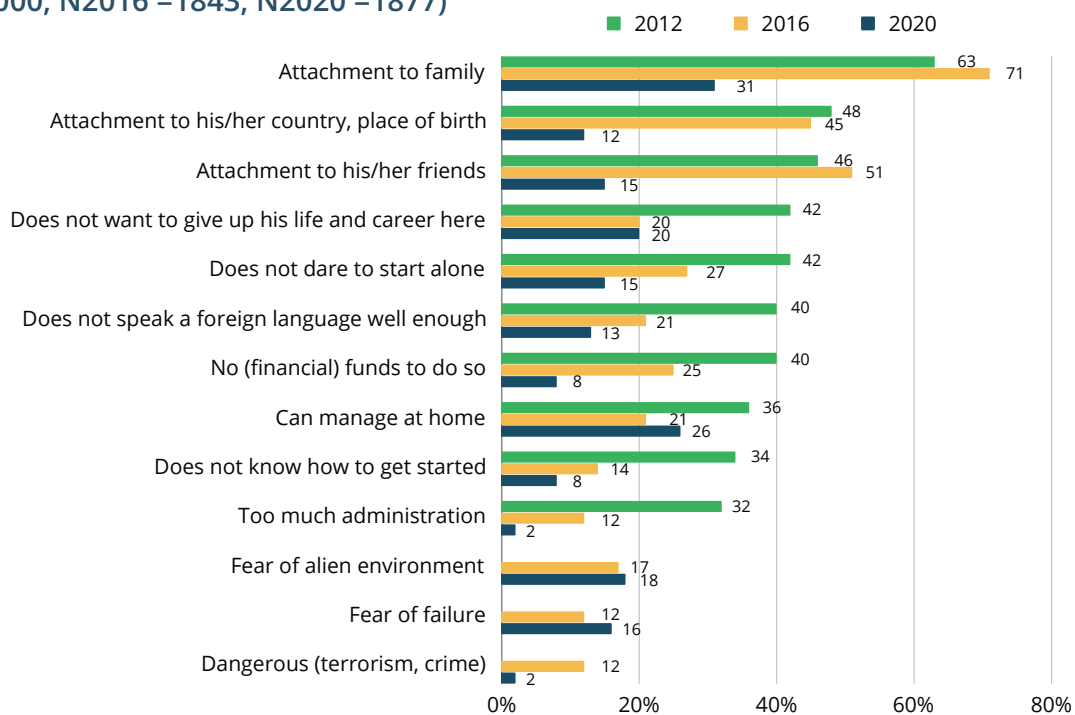
In addition to the factors that encourage mobility, it is also important to look at the reasons why today's young Hungarians choose not to leave the country for longer or shorter periods.

In 2008, young people did not plan to go abroad to work mainly because they did not want to be separated from their family members, secondly because there were jobs in Hungary, and thirdly because they did not know the language.

Since 2012, the main reason given by young people in each survey has been attachment to family, but the other reasons have changed compared to the previous two surveys. Whereas previously, attachment to their homeland and friends played a very strong role in preventing young people from going abroad, in 2020 these aspects have been pushed to the back of the queue, replaced by factors related to satisfaction with what they have at home (i.e. they can manage at home, they don't want to give up their life and career here) and fear (fear of foreign surroundings, fear of failure, afraid to go it alone). The biggest decline is in attachment to family, home and friends, but lack of funds, not knowing how to get started or excessive administrative procedures have also become less important barriers (Figure 7).

**Figure 7. Barriers to outward mobility<sup>12</sup>**

(N2012 =8000, N2016 =1843, N2020 =1877)



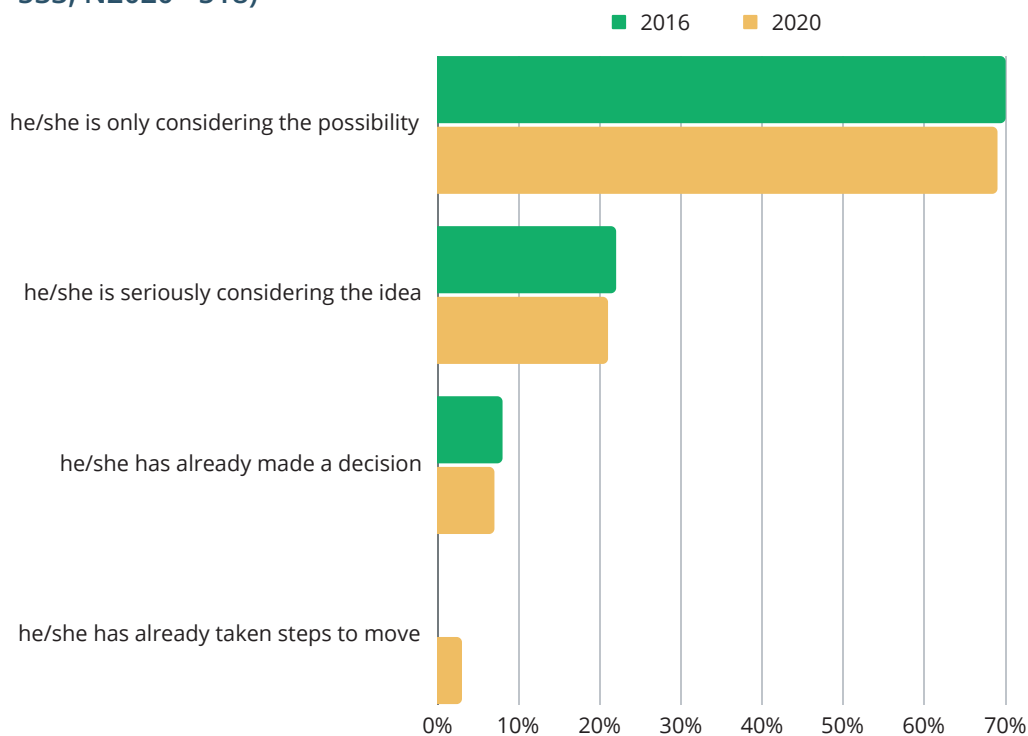
In addition to the above reasons, the 2020 Hungarian large sample youth survey also gave young people the opportunity to give their reasons for not going abroad in a free-response format. The main reasons given were that they were still in school, wanted to finish their studies in Hungary, wanted to get a profession or a degree and might consider working abroad afterwards.

For young people, going abroad is often seen as an option many just play around with, and although it is talked about a lot, it may not be followed up by concrete action. It is therefore

<sup>12</sup> In 2012, the question was asked on a five-point scale, and for the 2012 data, the aggregate percentage of responses to "4" and "5" are shown ("5" means completely withhold). For the 2016 and 2020 data, the percentage of mentions is shown.

## Figure 8. Strength of intention to move abroad

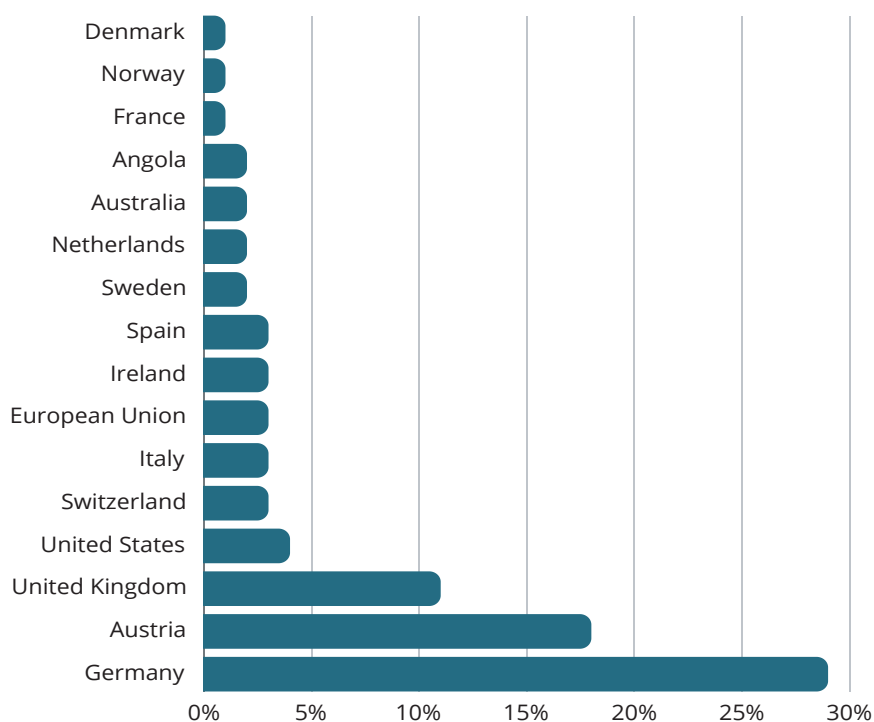
(N2016 =533, N2020 =518)



interesting to examine at what stage in young people's minds their plans to move abroad surface. Young people were asked about this in 2016 and 2020 and we can see that there has not been much change in this regard. Nearly 70 percent of young people aged 15-29 in Hungary are only pondering the possibility, while around one-fifth are already seriously considering moving abroad. 7 percent of young people have already made the decision to move out of Hungary and 3 percent

## Figure 9. Emigration destination countries

(N2020 =463)

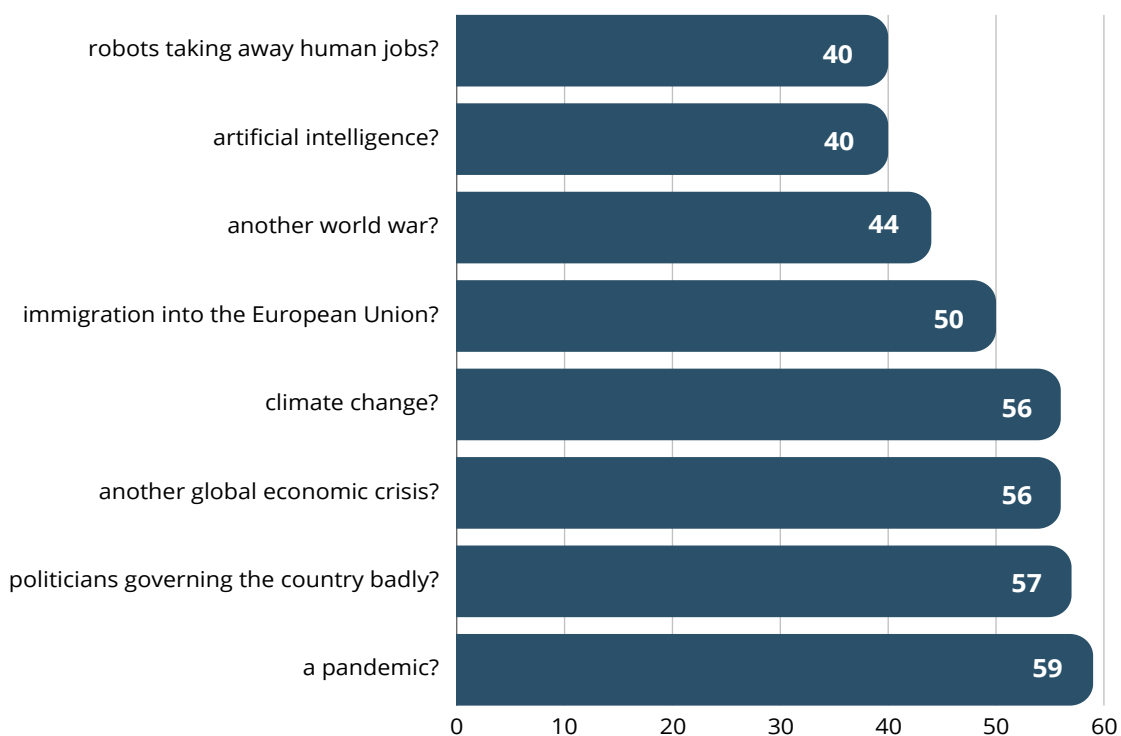


have already taken concrete steps to do so (Figure 8).

The Hungarian Youth 2020 survey asked young people which country they would go to. The main destinations confirmed by other mobility surveys are those where young people in Hungary would also go, with nearly 30 percent going to Germany, nearly one-fifth to Austria and around one-tenth of young Hungarians indicating the United Kingdom as their destination. Around 4 percent would go overseas, and 1-3 percent largely to other EU or non-EU countries (Figure 9).

## Figure 10. Young people's concerns regarding the future (To what extent are you concerned about...?)

(n=2,000)



Source: 2020 Hungarian large sample youth survey

## Uncertainty and migration

In today's rapidly changing world, we may often feel a sense of uncertainty – we're left scratching our heads upon hearing certain news stories or observing new processes being implemented in our surroundings. Given the new natural and social phenomena, many people ask themselves and experts what they can expect from the coming decades. How we plan our lives in the short and long term poses a significant challenge right now for many.

During the 2020 data collection of the Hungarian large sample youth survey (Pillók et al., 2021), young people were asked to what extent they fear climate change, migration pressure, economic crises, and other processes that pose challenges for the future. As shown in Figure 10, young people

aged 15-29 living in Hungary are most afraid of a pandemic<sup>13</sup> as well as of politicians governing the country badly. In addition to these, young people are afraid of two other potential future problems: a global economic crisis and climate change. Migration into Europe is an issue young people are most divided on; this is supported by the 50 points achieved on the 100-point scale.<sup>14</sup> The majority

**Table 1: Clusters' median values and the sample means of each variable**

To what extent are you concerned about...? (n=1941)

	THE BRAVE	THE PESSIMISTS	THE REALISTS	ENTIRE SAMPLE (AVERAGE)
A GLOBAL PANDEMIC?	1.84	4.15	3.38	<b>3.37</b>
POLITICIANS RUNNING THE COUNTRY POORLY?	1.81	3.99	3.33	<b>3.27</b>
ANOTHER GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS?	1.60	4.07	3.31	<b>3.26</b>
CLIMATE CHANGE?	1.66	4.03	3.30	<b>3.25</b>
MIGRATION INTO EUROPE?	1.48	3.80	3.01	<b>3.00</b>
ANOTHER WORLD WAR?	1.33	3.85	2.53	<b>2.76</b>
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?	1.35	3.56	2.40	<b>2.60</b>
ROBOTS TAKING AWAY HUMAN JOBS?	1.37	3.63	2.34	<b>2.60</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL SAMPLE</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>48%</b>	

Source: Hungarian youth survey 2020

of respondents do not fear the outbreak of a third world war, nor are they afraid of artificial intelligence, or that robots will replace people's jobs eventually. Based on the question, we formed three groups using K-means cluster analysis to see the differences between the groups of young people. The first group includes those who are not afraid of the listed phenomena – we named them the "Brave" group. In the second cluster we find those who are at the other end of the spectrum (the "Pessimists"); not only do they fear everything, but they also believe in the possibility of all

<sup>13</sup> Data collection for the Hungarian Youth Survey 2020 was carried out in autumn 2020, during the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

<sup>14</sup> The question was originally measured on a five-point Likert scale, and the answers were converted to a 100-point scale to make the differences more visible. On the 100-point scale, values above 50 indicate agreement and scores below 50 indicate disagreement.

eight crises happening. The third cluster is composed of those who slightly deviate from the main average. They fear climate change, migration, an economic crisis, a pandemic, and the mistakes of politicians, but most of them are not afraid of the outbreak of a world war, and compared to the average, they are less afraid of robots and artificial intelligence. We named the members of this latter cluster the “Realists”. They make up almost half of the sample while pessimists make up a third of the sample, and the brave make up nearly a fifth (Table 1).

To further characterise these cluster groups, we provided details as seen below:

## The Brave

This cluster is mainly composed of men (54 percent) and the relative majority (38 percent) are 25-29 years old. Regarding education levels, this group has the largest proportion (29 percent) of individuals with only a grade school education and with vocational training (21 percent). In terms of marital status, people living in a cohabiting relationship are overrepresented, but the absolute majority – as in the other clusters – are single or unmarried. Compared to the average, young people living in the Northern Great Plain and Central Hungary regions, as well as residents of cities make up an outstanding proportion. When it comes to mobility – i.e. whether they plan to go abroad to study or work – this group has the smallest proportion of mobile people (22 percent). The absolute majority of them have (65 percent) trust in the future.

## The Pessimists

This group is made up of 50 percent women and contains more than the average members from the 20-24 age group, skilled workers, and high school graduates. Out of the three clusters, the highest proportion of singles (77 percent) and the least amount of married people (10 percent) are present here. According to geographical location, compared to the average, there are more young people from the Northern Great Plain, Central Hungary and Central Transdanubia in this cluster, and when considering the type of settlement, there are relatively more people living in villages. Those belonging to this group have the largest proportion of foreign plans, 29 percent of them plan to leave the country.

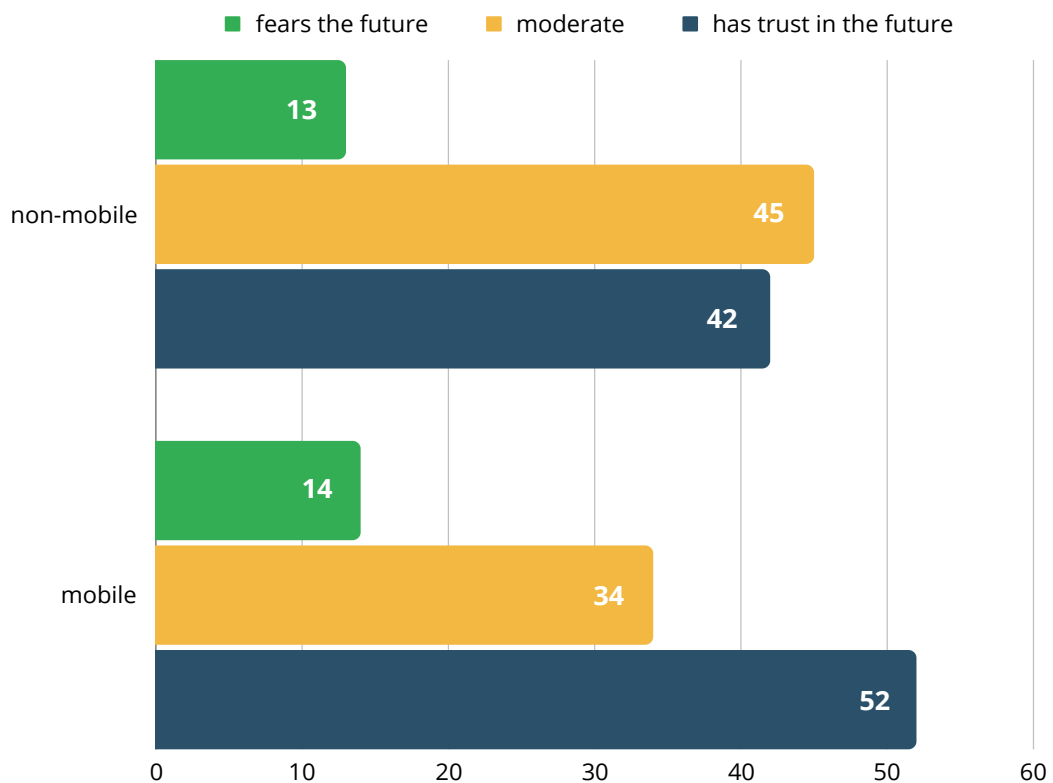
## The Realists

In terms of gender distribution, men are in the absolute majority (53 percent) in this cluster. The age distribution corresponds to the average. When considering education, graduates or those with higher education are overrepresented here. Among the three groups, the proportion of married people is the highest (12 percent). Young people from the Southern Great Plain and Western Transdanubia, as well as those living in the capital or cities with county status can be found at above-average rates. 27 percent intend to gain experience in another country.

When examining which type of cluster is typical for mobile and nonmobile young people, it can be seen that in both groups there is a relative majority of realists (48-48 percent), but pessimists



**Figure 11. Trust in the future based on mobility intentions**  
**(Overall, do you look forward to the future or do you fear it?)**  
 (n=2000)



Source: 2020 Hungarian large sample youth survey

are overrepresented among those with mobility plans (37 percent) and compared to the average, there are fewer brave people (15 percent).

Another question provides an opportunity to examine young people's confidence in the future as a whole. Based on that, it can be concluded that 44 percent of 15-29-year-olds in Hungary strongly or to some extent have confidence in the future, 42 percent moderately, and 14 percent strongly or to some extent fear the future. Analysing the question on the basis of mobility intention, we can observe a significant connection<sup>15</sup> between mobility goals and expectations about the future. More than half of the young people who want to study or work abroad have confidence in the future, while this is 10 percent lower among the non-mobile young people. Among those who do not want to move to another country, there are more than average people who simultaneously intend to stay and trust in the years ahead of them (Figure 11).

An important and attention-grabbing piece of information is what young people consider to be the most pressing problem of youth. We wondered if there was a difference between the two groups in this regard. A significant difference can be observed<sup>16</sup>: compared to the average, more mobile young people think that the biggest problem is uncertainty and an unpredictable future (26 percent), as well as unemployment and difficulties in finding a job (7 percent).

<sup>15</sup> Cramer's V=0.104;  $p \leq 0.000$

<sup>16</sup> Cramer's V=0.108;  $p \leq 0.000$

## 5. Conclusion

The phenomenon of migration has existed since the dawn of humanity. As such, the willingness to be mobile is part of human nature, albeit with significant differences between mobility potentials. Today's accelerated, globalised world economy rewards mobility in a certain sense: employees who speak multiple languages, have foreign experience, learn about other cultures, are innovative and flexible, and willing to go anywhere in the world to acquire the know-how necessary to increase economic competitiveness can gain a serious advantage in the labour market. However, there are other, more drastic reasons for migration, such as when people threatened by war or natural disasters are forced to leave their homes en masse. Measuring migration is difficult in many ways since it necessitates defining an ongoing human behavior and movement. The dilemmas of definition and measurement are further complicated by the fact that different types of migration are becoming dominant in our changing world: while previously the attention of researchers was mainly tied to economic migration, from the mid-1990s the focus shifted towards refugees of other cultures, and today the effect of epidemics and wars in the geographic proximity becomes the most important factor of investigation. The decision to migrate is the end result of a complex process, which is greatly influenced by external events in addition to the individual life situation. The past year and a half contained many defining, paradigm-changing events, all of which significantly influenced the lives of societies. And unfortunately, this story is not over yet. During the coronavirus epidemic, the measures introduced by national governments primarily limited mobility, but the war raging in our neighborhood also has a significant impact on everyday life. As a result, young people's future plans and fears about the future may become more and more pivotal in terms of their decision to migrate, as it not only influences the decision, but also has other social consequences if a young person travels abroad to gain experience or sees an escape route.

The research seems to confirm the hypothesis that young people are the social group most affected by the issue of emigration. In their case, it is important to consider, on the one hand, how the world-historical events taking place around them affect their future plans, and on the other hand, how much their perceptions of the future influence the migration potential. The majority of young Hungarians are aware that the future holds many challenges for them, that they will have to deal with serious problems, and that they will have to do a lot to solve them. They mainly fear epidemics, the poor governance of politicians, economic crises, and climate change. They are most divided on the challenges of migration from other continents into Europe and are least afraid of the processes generated by the fourth industrial revolution.

Based on the 2020 data of the Hungarian large sample youth survey, three groups can be distinguished among young people aged 15–29 living in Hungary in relation to the above attitudes. One group is essentially not afraid of any negative impacts, the other group, on the contrary, predicts and fears the occurrence of all of them, and the third group is mainly afraid of political, economic and natural crises.

More than half of those planning to study or work abroad have a sense of confidence in the future, and a higher-than-average proportion of them believe that the biggest problem for young people is uncertainty and an unpredictable future, as well as unemployment and difficulties in finding a job.

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