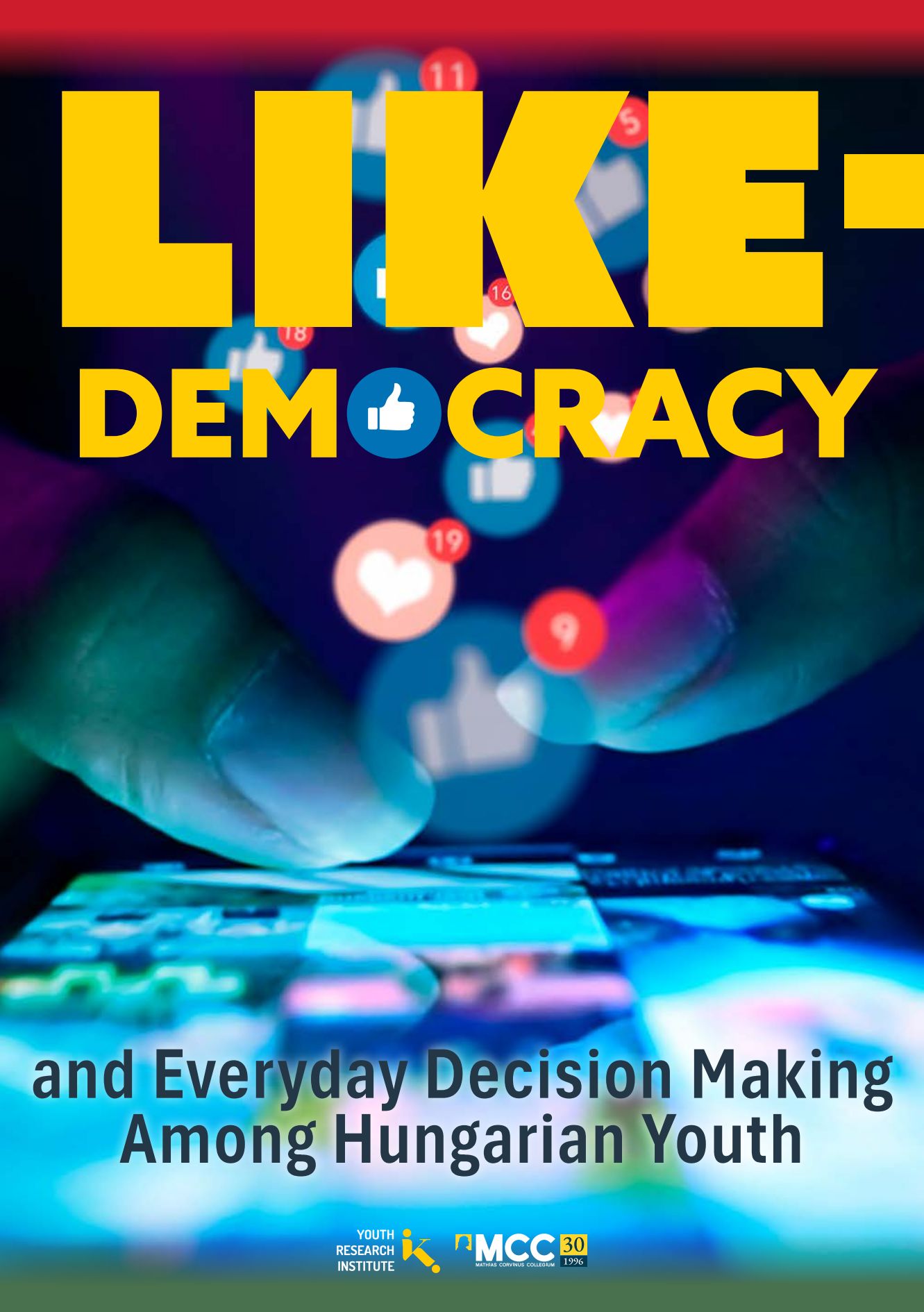


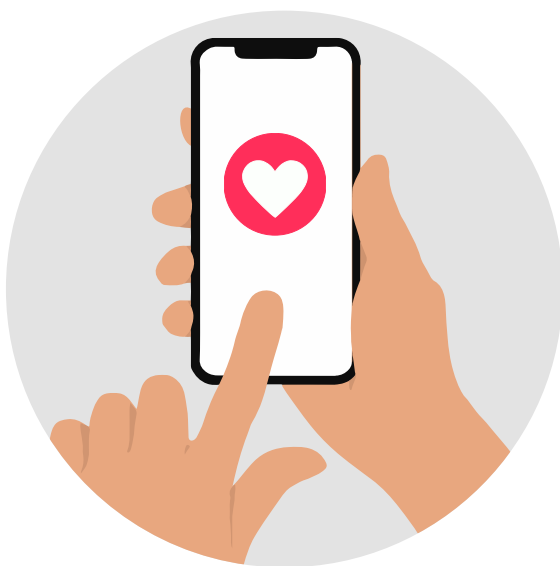
LIKE- DEMOCRACY



**and Everyday Decision Making
Among Hungarian Youth**

LIKE- DEMOCRACY

and Everyday Decision Making
Among Hungarian Youth



YOUTH
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE



MCC 30
MATHIAS CORVINUS COLLEGIUM 1996

Editor: Georgina Kiss-Kozma

Peer Reviewer: István Stumpf

Publisher: Youth Research Institute, Mathias Corvinus Collegium

ISBN: 978-615-6221-51-3

www.ifjusagkutatoiintezet.hu



Preface

GEORGINA KISS-KOZMA

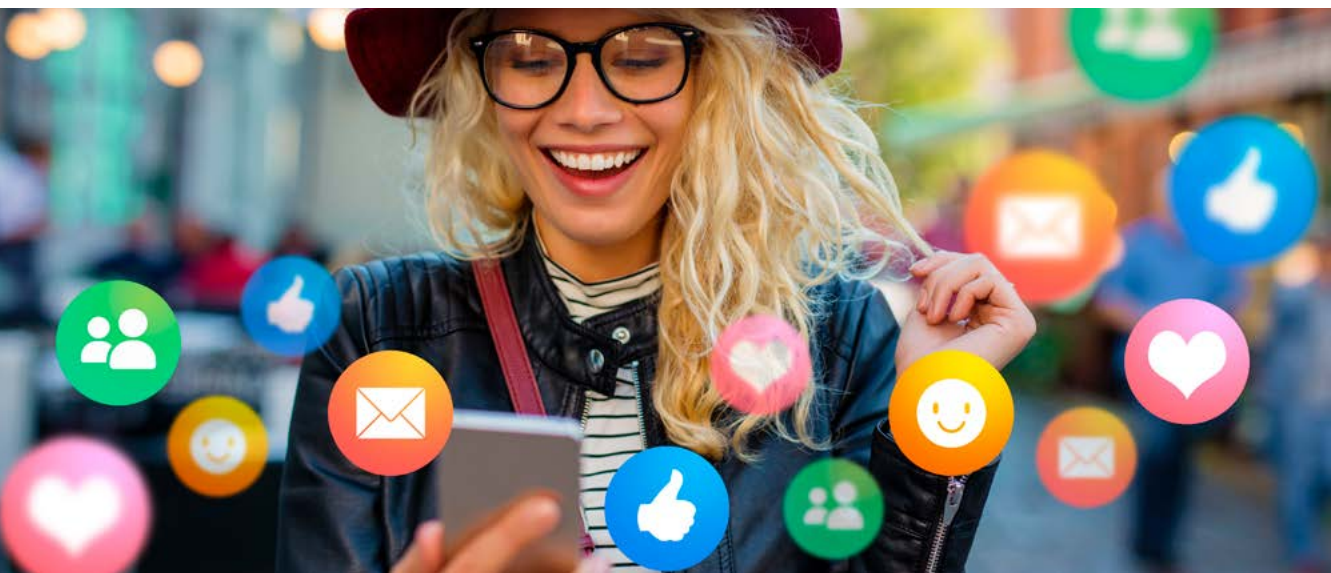
The civic and political engagement of young people has long been the subject of lively debate, which tends to intensify in the run-up to elections. In Hungary, younger generations were for a considerable period characterised as a “new silent generation”¹, a portrayal shaped by notions of conformity and passivity. In recent years, however, the rapidly evolving social and global environment has generated new challenges and opportunities, rendering young people’s political behaviour increasingly difficult to assess.

In the case of Generation Z, it is particularly pertinent to examine the extent to which they accept the social norms inherited from previous generations, and the degree to which they exhibit more rebellious attitudes. Alongside traditional forms of political participation—such as voting, petition signing, and participation in demonstrations—new forms of engagement in the online sphere have gained prominence, significantly reshaping the very meaning of political interest. In an era marked by globalisation, technological advancement, and an often overwhelming flow of information, the challenges facing young people are multifaceted: how to orient themselves, whom to trust, how to evaluate the credibility of

information, and how to form their own civic and political views. These questions are particularly significant given that navigating between information conveyed by family, social media, and artificial intelligence alike influences both decision-making and independent thinking.

This study seeks to explore the complexity of young people’s political and civic behaviour, to highlight the significance of emerging forms of participation, and to contribute to an understanding of how different generations respond to global and local changes. The emphasis is placed not merely on statistical indicators, but on the deeper, dynamic, and often contradictory patterns that characterise young people’s lives.

1 Székely, L. (2024): Parázs a hamu alatt – éled-e az új csendes generáció? Magyar Tudomány, 185(7): 855-862.





Contents

Preface (Georgina Kiss-Kozma)	3
Generational Conflict and Consensus (Levente Székely)	7
Leadership Skills and Sense of Security (Roland Tardi).....	15
Come What May? The Present and Future Outlook of Hungarian Youth (Miklós Bálint Tóth)	23
Scrolling Realities: Political Content Consumption on Social Media (László Bálint Tóth)	29
Manipulation and Credibility in Social Media (Georgina Kiss-Kozma).....	39
Notes on Methodology	47



Generational Conflict and Consensus

LEVENTE SZÉKELY

Generations and the perception of intergenerational tension

“When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years.”
Often attributed to Mark Twain, this wry observation captures the trials of growing up and the tensions between generations.

Few themes have proven as enduring or as compelling as generational struggle and intergenerational tension. The recognition that generations socialised in different contexts perceive the world in fundamentally different ways was first systematically articulated by Mannheim (1969). Today, the generational perspective constitutes an engaging theoretical framework, though in more extreme cases it can take on a quasi-horoscopic character, despite its evident limitations as a universal explanatory model. Its enduring appeal lies primarily in its capacity to address a widely posed question: what are young people like (Székely, 2020)? One might immediately add: and to what extent do they differ from older cohorts? Does generational tension exist within society?

In recent years, the dominant generational narrative within Hungarian academic discourse has portrayed a “new silent generation”, characterised as conformist, uncertain, and passive (Székely, 2014). At the same time, broader public discourse on generations has been shaped to a far greater extent by international—often replicated domestically—marketing projects, science

communication initiatives, popular culture narratives, and political campaigns than by empirically grounded, methodologically rigorous research. More recently, a number of international shifts in social mood have depicted younger generations as assertive, critical, and at times openly rebellious in political terms. Examples include movements such as “OK Boomer”, “Fridays for Future”, “Black Lives Matter”, and more recently so-called Generation Z revolutions. While these phenomena are undoubtedly relevant, their applicability to the Hungarian context is only partial, and it may even be argued that their long-term impact is uneven—even within the Western world, if discernible at all. Nevertheless, the existence and nature of intergenerational conflict remain important subjects of inquiry in Hungary as well.

A representative survey conducted by the Youth Research Institute in spring 2022 found that Hungarian adults generally perceive the presence of generational tension. Twice as many respondents believed that such tension exists as those who believed it does not (41% versus 20%), while the remainder (38%) expressed ambivalence, both

sensing and not sensing such conflict. The findings also indicate that perceptions vary across age groups: the younger the respondents, the more likely they are to perceive tension. Notably, beyond age, no significant differences emerge along other sociodemographic variables (such as educational attainment or type of settlement) in the perception of generational conflict (Youth Research Institute, 2022).

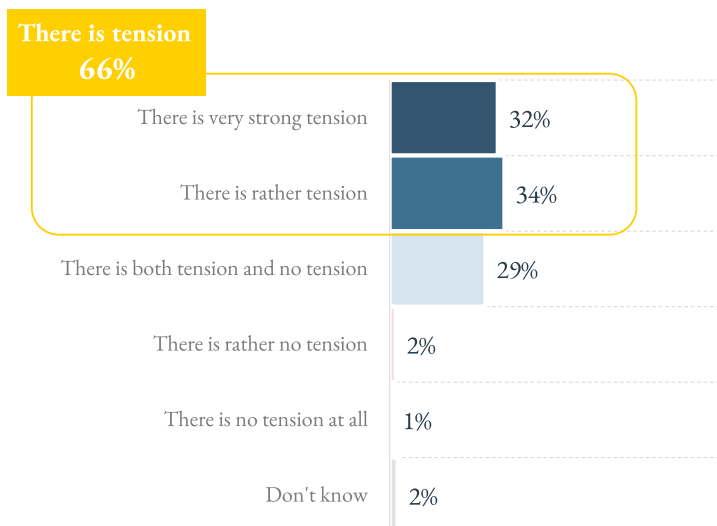
More recent data from a study conducted by the Youth Research Institute at the end of 2025 show that a majority (66%) of those aged 15–39 likewise perceive conflict between younger and older generations. The proportion of respondents who perceive no such tension is negligible (3%). Although the

youngest cohort (aged 15–17) generally recognises the existence of such conflict, they are less likely to consider it very pronounced. By contrast, among other age groups under 35, the most frequent response characterises the tension as “very significant”. Although the two surveys employed different methodologies², the identical phrasing of the question allows for comparison, revealing a higher proportion of respondents perceiving tension in 2025. This increase is observable overall, but the internal distribution of responses is even more revealing: in 2022, 14% of those aged 18–29 and 12% of those aged 30–39 perceived the conflict as very significant, whereas by 2025 this proportion had risen to approximately one-third in both groups.

² The 2022 study was conducted using a representative sample of 1,000 people aged 18 and over in Hungary, interviewed by telephone (CATI), while the 2025 study was carried out online (CAWI) among those aged 15–39. Methodological differences also lead to differences in content; for example, respondents tend to give more extreme answers more frequently in online surveys.



Fig. 1. Generational tensions



(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 / Question: In your opinion, in Hungary today, is there rather tension or rather no tension between younger and older people?)

Similarly to the 2022 findings, no statistically significant differences can be observed between men and women, or between respondents living in the capital and those in rural areas. However, differences do emerge with respect to educational attainment and financial

circumstances. More moderate responses tend to characterise graduates and those in more favourable financial situations, whereas individuals with lower levels of education and more constrained economic conditions are more likely to provide more extreme assessments

The contemporary nature of generational tension

Conflicts between generations may surface in a variety of contexts, and it is by no means inconsequential whether young people experience these tensions directly within their immediate environment or encounter them more indirectly. Research conducted by the Youth Research Institute also sought to identify the domains in which such tensions are

more pronounced, as well as those characterised by greater harmony.

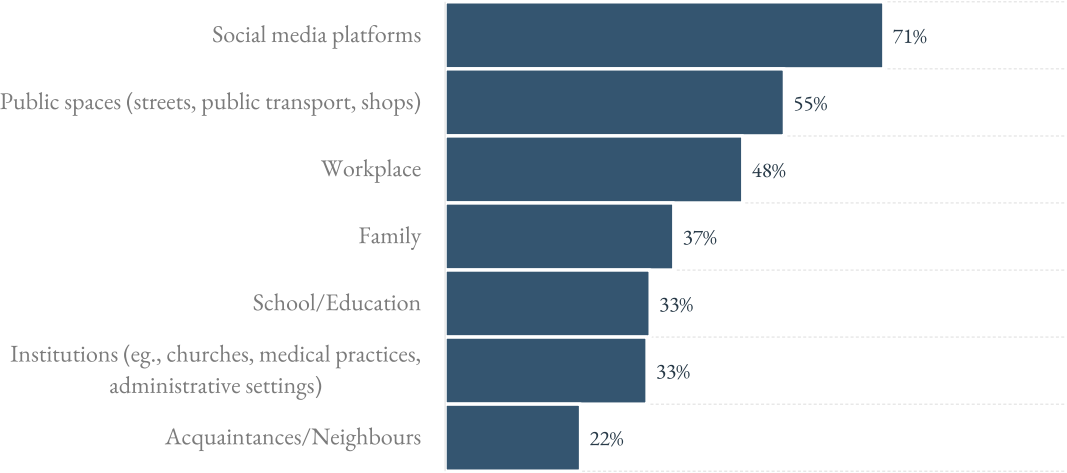
The findings highlight the amplifying role of social media, with nearly three-quarters (71%) of respondents aged 15–39 reporting that they have encountered generational conflict on social media platforms. The next most prominent setting is the street, where a majority (55%) reported experiencing

such tensions, largely due to the fact that these are shared physical spaces occupied predominantly by strangers. In the workplace, fewer than half of respondents reported such experiences, while approximately one-third encountered generational conflict within the family, in schools, or in other institutional settings. In neighbourhood contexts, just over one-fifth reported such experiences.

If the sample is restricted to those who believe that there is rather tension, or that there is significant tension between younger and older generations, higher frequencies are observed across all contexts; however, the overall ranking of these environments remains

essentially unchanged. Although, in general, there are no substantial differences across sociodemographic groups when examining specific contexts individually, it is nonetheless observable that women tend to report experiencing generational conflict in a wider range of settings than men. Similarly, perceptions of conflict are more pronounced among those aged 25 to 34, and they also increase with higher levels of educational attainment. At the same time, as noted earlier, the overall perception of generational tension becomes more moderate as educational attainment rises, indicating a nuanced and somewhat paradoxical relationship between these factors.

Fig. 2. Situations in which tensions are experienced



(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 / Question: In what situations do you personally experience intergenerational tensions?)

A particularly intriguing question is whether the perceived tension between generations possesses a political dimension. An examination of first-time voters following the 2022 election suggested that the overwhelming majority cast

their votes in alignment with their parents, indicating that intergenerational tension within families was not especially pronounced (Székely, 2024). Large-scale youth surveys consistently demonstrate that young people in Hungary aged

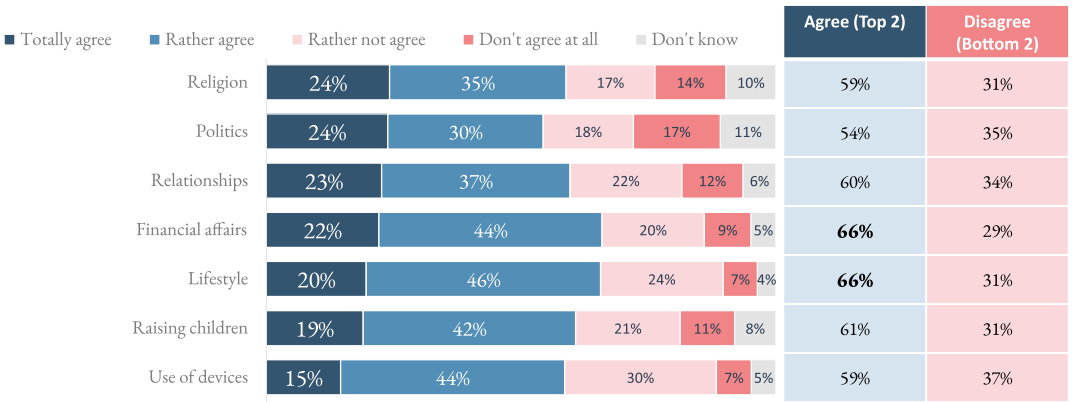
15–29 tend to agree with their parents, whether on matters of worldview or political issues (Székely, 2021).

Recent research by the Youth Research Institute likewise confirms that those living in opinion harmony with their parents outnumber those who perceive the world differently. Roughly two out of three respondents report general agreement with their parents. This concordance is most evident in financial and lifestyle matters, while the greatest areas of disagreement are found in relation to the use of digital devices and politics. Even in these domains, however, a majority (54% and

59%, respectively) report agreement with their parents.

Notably, none of the examined issues display statistically significant explanatory power when analysed against sociodemographic background variables such as gender, age group, or residence in the capital versus rural areas. With regard to educational attainment, a general pattern emerges whereby individuals with higher levels of education tend to agree with their parents to a greater extent in most areas. The principal exception is the use of digital devices, where those with higher educational attainment appear more critical of their parents’ attitudes.

Fig. 3. Tensions within the family



(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 / Question: Generally speaking, do you/did you rather agree or rather disagree with your parents on the following issues?)

Based on responses to other questions included in the survey, it can be inferred that young people tend to attribute responsibility for existing tensions more to older generations than to their own. In other words, rather than the familiar refrain of “young people these days”, an “OK Boomer” type of attitude appears to predominate. Two-thirds (68%) of

respondents aged 15–39 believe that, at most, only a small proportion of senior citizens could be persuaded to change their attitudes on public and political issues. By contrast, they consider more than half of young people to be open to persuasion (55%). Notably, even among those who perceive very significant generational conflict, a majority maintain

that nearly all—or at least most—young people could be convinced to revise their views on political matters.

The findings of the Youth Research Institute yield several important conclusions. First, the perception of generational tension is clearly substantiated, at least from the perspective of younger cohorts. Second, the extent to which such tension is perceived is strongly context-dependent: it tends to be more pronounced in impersonal settings, particularly in interactions with strangers, than within the immediate social environment of young people, such as the family. Third, while tensions within the family do possess a political dimension, generational disagreement in political matters is not necessarily perceived as more significant than in other domains, such as the use of digital devices. Finally, young people regard their own generation as considerably more open to persuasion in public and political matters than older cohorts, especially the generation of their grandparents.

Taken together, while it would be inaccurate to claim that generational divisions in political matters are absent in Hungarian society, the evidence allows us to conclude with confidence that such conflicts are not primarily political in nature, nor are they chiefly rooted within the family context.

SOURCES

Youth Research Institute (2022): Létezik generációk közötti harmónia, legalábbis az idős(ebb)ek így gondolják. Press release. <https://ifjusagkutatoiintezet.hu/sajtokozlemenyn/letezik-generaciok-kozotti-harmonia-legalabbis-az-idos-ebb-ek-igy-gondoljak>

Mannheim, K. (1969): A nemzedéki probléma. In Huszár, T. – Sükösd, M. (szerk.): Ifjúságszociológia. Budapest, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 31–67.

Székely, L. (2024): Az első voks – az első szavazók választói magatartása. In: Papházi, V. – Oross, D. – Szabó, A. /szerk./: Csendes? Mozgalmi? Miként jellemezhető a magyar ifjúság a 21. században. Nemzeti Ifjúsági Tanács Szövetség, Budapest, 151–168. <https://yzfolyoirat.hu/index.php/yz/libraryFiles/downloadPublic/7>

Székely, L. (2021): A járvány nemzedéke – magyar ifjúság a koronavírus-járvány idején. (in: Székely, L. /szerk./: Magyar fiatalok a koronavírus-járvány idején. Tanulmánykötet a Magyar Ifjúság Kutatás 2020 eredményeiről. Enigma2001, 9-31. ISBN: 978-615-81136-3-2)

Székely, L. (2020): A generációs elméletek értelméről. Szociológiai Szemle, 30(1), 107-114. https://szociologia.hu/uploads/documents/107_114_oldal.pdf

Székely, L. (2014): Az új csendes generáció. (in: Nagy, Á. – Székely, L. /szerk./: Másodkézből – Magyar Ifjúság 2012. ISZT Alapítvány-Kutatópont. 9-28.)





Leadership Skills and Sense of Security

ROLAND TARDI

Which types of leaders do young Hungarians prefer?

The year 2026 is an election year in Hungary, making it particularly significant in terms of young people's prospects and advancement (Székely – Kiss-Kozma, 2024). In this context, it is especially important to understand what kinds of leadership qualities young people value in those occupying positions of authority. Research conducted by the Youth Research Institute indicates that the leadership ideal among Hungarian youth is shaped by a dual emphasis on practical competence and commitment to national sovereignty. This finding aligns with the relevant scholarly literature, which consistently identifies competence as the most important leadership trait (Willis et al., 2021; Badman et al., 2022).

Within this framework, competence may be understood to encompass experience, the ability to achieve results, and overall effectiveness—dimensions that serve as practical indicators of leadership capability, given that performance in these areas can be assessed as either strong or weak (Valgarðsson et al., 2024). In the survey conducted by the Youth Research Institute, a majority of respondents (54%) identified extensive experience as the most important criterion for leadership suitability, reflecting a preference for professional, meritocratic forms of governance (Gherghina – Tap, 2020).

A particularly revealing finding is that prioritising commitment to the national cause (40%) significantly outweighs adherence to mainstream liberal thinking (22%), suggesting a shift in the value orientation of Hungarian youth away from global ideological frameworks and towards a more nation-state-centred perspective. In the hierarchy of priorities, the primacy of

national commitment (23%) is more than twice that of foreign language proficiency (11%), indicating that loyalty to the community is regarded as a more important attribute than technocratic skills.

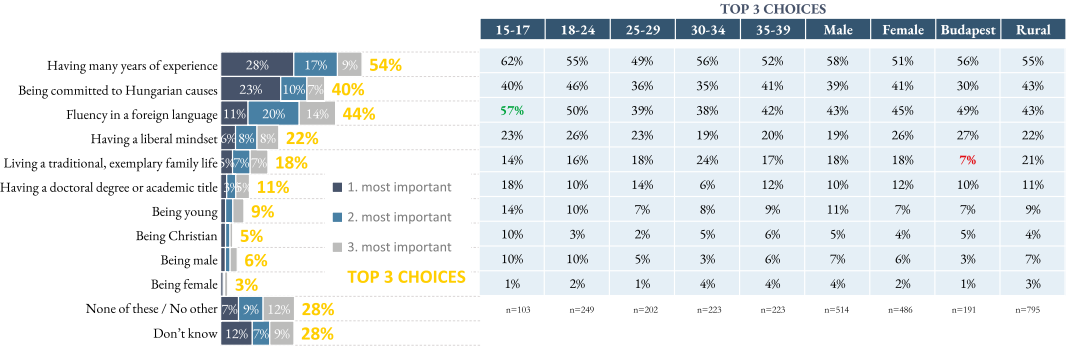
Among young people living in rural areas, the demand for national commitment is especially pronounced (43%), in contrast to their counterparts in the capital (30%), illustrating divergent trajectories in political socialisation (Tóth – Radnai, 2025). Similarly, a traditional family-oriented lifestyle as a leadership virtue carries greater weight among rural youth (21%) than among those in Budapest (7%). The data further suggest that academic qualifications (11%) and identity-based considerations (such as gender or religion) play only a marginal role compared to tangible experience and loyalty to the nation.

This preference for what may be termed a “sovereigntist leadership profile” can be interpreted as a logical

consequence of the previously observed erosion of trust in European Union institutions (Devine et al., 2023). Overall, it can be concluded that the majority

of Hungarian youth view experienced leaders who represent national interests, rather than technocratic politicians, as the key to future stability.

Fig. 1. Key leadership competencies



(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 / Question: Which qualities make someone most suitable to work in a position of responsibility? / Please select the second and third most important.)

Sense of security and its enhancement

As Abraham Maslow demonstrated in his seminal 1943 work A Theory of Human Motivation, through the model later popularised as the “Maslow pyramid”, scholarly discourse has clearly established that the sense of security constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of both balanced human existence and societal stability. Within Maslow’s framework, the need for security follows directly after physiological needs and encompasses such factors as physical protection, financial stability, health preservation, and the desire for predictability and order (Maslow, 1943).

The relevant academic literature has engaged extensively with this topic (Bar-Tal – Jacobson, 1998; Brady et al., 2019), and has also provided evidence that

perceptions of security can shape political attitudes, influence the evaluation of leaders, and contribute to the formation of political preferences (Gillath – Hart, 2010). Ultimately, these dynamics may also affect governmental stability (Dúró et al., 2022).

According to research conducted by the Youth Research Institute, respondents feel most secure within their private sphere, that is, in their own homes (86%, mean: 4.51). In their immediate environment—such as their local community, workplace, or educational institution—this proportion decreases to 68%. A notable divide emerges in the assessment of the macro-level environment among those aged 15–17: 52% of

respondents report feeling secure in Hungary, rather than in the countries of the European Union. While the underlying reasons for this are complex, it is worth noting that Hungary ranks 37th out of 204 countries in crime statistics (Losonczi, 2025), placing it among the safer countries within the EU, alongside Poland and Czechia (Eurostat, 2025).

The digital sphere emerges as the least secure environment, particularly social media platforms, where the proportion of positive responses is only 37%. A demographic breakdown reveals even more pronounced gender differences, with men reporting higher levels of confidence across all examined categories; nearly half of respondents feel more secure within Hungary. Examining age cohorts, the youngest group (15–17) reports the highest levels of perceived security across all categories, with this sense of security declining as age increases—particularly when levels of online activity are taken into account.

Differences based on place of residence further indicate that young people in Budapest feel significantly more secure both within the European Union (58%) and in the digital sphere than their counterparts in rural areas. It is also noteworthy that, at the macro level and in virtual environments, a substantial proportion of respondents (30–39%) provided neutral responses, suggesting an ambivalent assessment of these domains. The lowest mean score (3.11) was recorded for social media use, reflecting a heightened awareness of digital vulnerability.

The sense of security among Hungarian youth appears stable at the local level, yet significant deficits emerge in systemic and digital contexts, further stratified by gender and place of residence.

The findings also suggest that young people's sense of security is strongly rooted in the framework of national sovereignty. While 86% feel secure within their own homes, this figure drops to just 42% when considering the European Union. This marked disparity indicates that supranational institutions are perceived as less capable of providing the stability associated with one's immediate environment; among rural respondents, perceived security within the EU falls even below the national average, at 38%.

Enhancing the sense of security appears to depend less on deeper integration and more on economic self-determination, as 70% of respondents identified financial savings as the primary factor. In addition, 47% indicated that experienced political leadership would provide a genuine guarantee of security, reflecting a demand for effective nation-state governance. Particularly telling is that 62% of those concerned about their subjective sense of security expect improvement from the resolution of the war in a neighbouring country, pointing to perceived shortcomings in EU peace policy and crisis management.

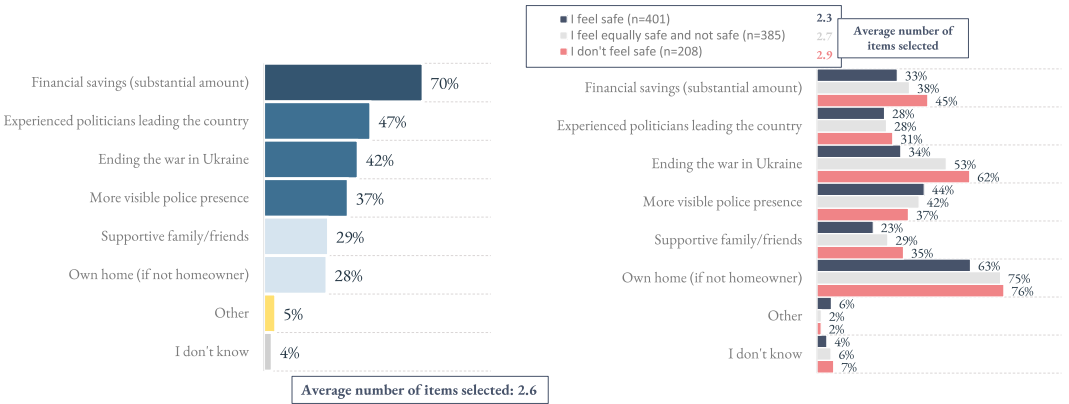
A sharp divergence is observable between Budapest (58%) and rural areas (38%) in perceptions of security within the EU. In the digital domain—especially in relation to social media use—respondents report notably low levels of

perceived security (mean: 3.11). The significant difference between men (50%) and women (34%) in perceptions of security within the EU further deepens scepticism regarding the effectiveness of European protective mechanisms. Meanwhile, the 37% demand for a more visible presence of authorities signals a preference for strengthening

national frameworks of public order and safety, as well as indicating a generally law-and-order-oriented attitude among young people (Sheeran et al., 2023).

Overall, the data suggest that genuine security is associated, above all, with financial independence, competent national governance, and the strength of local communities.

Fig. 2. The most desired factors contributing to a sense of security



(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 / Question: From the following, what would help you feel safer in Hungary? / How safe do you feel in Hungary?)

Attention allocated to social groups

The research data highlight a systemic uncertainty surrounding the European Union’s role in social policy: nearly a quarter of respondents (23%) are unable to assess which groups receive the least attention from the EU, more than double the level of uncertainty expressed in relation to the Hungarian state (10%). It is important to note that, according to the relevant literature, benevolence and care are key traits that directly influence perceptions

of security (Dzordzormenyoh, 2024; Naughton et al., 2024).

Although in both the EU and Hungarian contexts the poor are identified as the most neglected group, this perception is less pronounced in the case of the EU (22%). Rather than indicating inefficiency, this appears to reflect a more abstract sense of uncertainty regarding EU-level decision-making, which is perceived as being further removed from everyday lived experience (Weinberg, 2023).

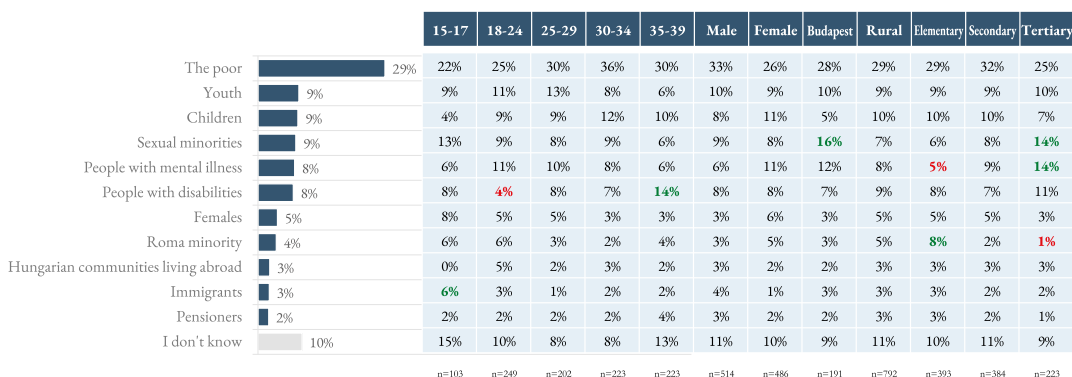
A particularly sensitive issue concerns the situation of ethnic Hungarians beyond the borders of Hungary, who are perceived by young respondents as being significantly more neglected by the European Union (8%) than by the Hungarian state (3%). Among the youngest age group (15–17-year-olds), this critique is even more pronounced, with 17% perceiving ethnic Hungarians beyond the borders as neglected at the EU level, suggesting a heightened sensitivity towards notions of national community and shared destiny.

The data indicate that the responsibility of the Hungarian state is perceived as

considerably more concrete and directly accountable to the population, whereas the EU's social dimension is viewed as a more distant and intangible entity. Higher levels of uncertainty among rural youth further reinforce the perception that EU cohesion and social policy do not sufficiently reach broader segments of society.

Findings from the Youth Research Institute clearly demonstrate that Hungarian youth continue to see the nation-state as the primary guarantor of social security, while perceiving the EU institutional system as an alienated and opaque structure, disconnected from social reality.

Fig. 3. Social groups receiving the least state attention and support



(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 / Question: In your opinion, which social group receives the least attention or support from the Hungarian state?)

The research indicates that Hungarian young people's ideal of leadership is defined by a combination of practical competence and commitment to national sovereignty. The value shift observed among youth places experienced leaders who represent national interests at the forefront, as opposed to global ideological frameworks and technocratic politicians.

In terms of perceived security, a strong local anchoring can be identified, as young people primarily locate the foundations of stability within the nation-state framework, while perceiving both supranational and digital spaces as more uncertain. The findings further highlight that, in their view, the Hungarian state remains the principal

guarantor of social security, whereas international institutions are seen as alienated structures disconnected from social reality.

For young people, genuine security is ultimately associated with economic self-determination and competent national governance.

SOURCES

- Badman, R. P., Wang, A. X., Skrodzki, M., Cho, H.-C., Aguilar-Lleyda, D., Shiono, N., Yoo, S. B. M., Chiang, Y.-S., & Akaishi, R. (2022): Trust in Institutions, Not in Political Leaders, Determines Compliance in COVID-19 Prevention Measures within Societies across the Globe. *Behavioral Sciences*, 12(6), 170. Crossref. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12060170>
- Bar-Tal, D., & Jacobson, D. (1998): A Psychological Perspective on Security. *Applied Psychology*, 47(1), 59–71. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1998.tb00013.x>
- Brady, W. J., Wills, J. A., Burkart, D., Jost, J. T., & Van Bavel, J. J. (2019): An ideological asymmetry in the diffusion of moralized content on social media among political leaders. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 148(10), 1802–1813. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0000532>
- Devine, D., Valgarðsson, V., Smith, J., Jennings, W., Scotto di Vettimo, M., Bunting, H., & McKay, L. (2023): Political trust in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic: A meta-analysis of 67 studies. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 31(3), 657–679. Crossref. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2023.2169741>
- Dúró, J., Bókay, D., & Janik, S. (2022): Kormányzati stabilitásra ható tényezők a visegrádiországokban. *SZÁZADVÉG*, (1), 171–196.
- Dzordzormenyoh, M. K. (2024): Why should we trust our public leaders in Africa? A comparative analysis between 2019 and 2021. *International Journal of Public Leadership*, 20(2), 109–131. Crossref. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijpl-09-2023-0071>
- Eurostat (2025): Crime statistics - Statistics Explained.
- Gherghina, S., & Tap, P. (2020): First-time voters and honest political leaders: Evidence from the 2019 presidential election in Romania. *East European Politics*, 37(3), 496–513. Crossref. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2020.1824907>
- Gillath, O., & Hart, J. (2010): The effects of psychological security and insecurity on political attitudes and leadership preferences. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 40(1), 122–134. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.614>
- Maslow, A. H. (1943): A theory of human motivation. *Psychological review*, 50(4), 370.
- Naughton, B., O'Shea, D., van der Werff, L., & Buckley, F. (2024): Influencing a nation: How a leader's interpersonal emotion regulation influences citizen compliance via trust and emotions during a global pandemic. *Emotion*, 24(1), 196–212. Crossref. <https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0001262>
- Sheeran, A. M., Freiburger, T. L., & Knoche, V. A. (2023): Improving Youths' Perceptions of Law Enforcement: Results From an Experimental Design in Two Cities. *Crime & Delinquency*, 69(9), 1614–1642. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00111287221074943>
- Székely, L., & Kiss-Kozma, G. (2025): HOT5 – Highlights of 2024. In *Youth'24* (pp. 5–7).
- Tóth, B. L., & Radnai, F. (2025): International Environment. In *Youth'24* (pp. 9–13).
- Valgarðsson, V., Jennings, W., Stoker, G., McKay, L., Devine, D., & Clarke, N. (2024): The Good Politician: Competence, Integrity and Authenticity in Seven Democracies. *Political Studies*, 73(2), 631–656. Crossref. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217241261180>
- Weinberg, J. (2023): Building Trust in Political Office: Testing the Efficacy of Political Contact and Authentic Communication. *Political Studies*, 72(4), 1288–1312. Crossref. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217231185706>
- Willis, H., Smith, J. C., & Devine, D. (2021): Care to trust? Gender and trust in leaders during the Coronavirus pandemic. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 31(sup1), 232–244. Crossref. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2021.1924737>



Come What May? The Present and Future Outlook of Hungarian Youth

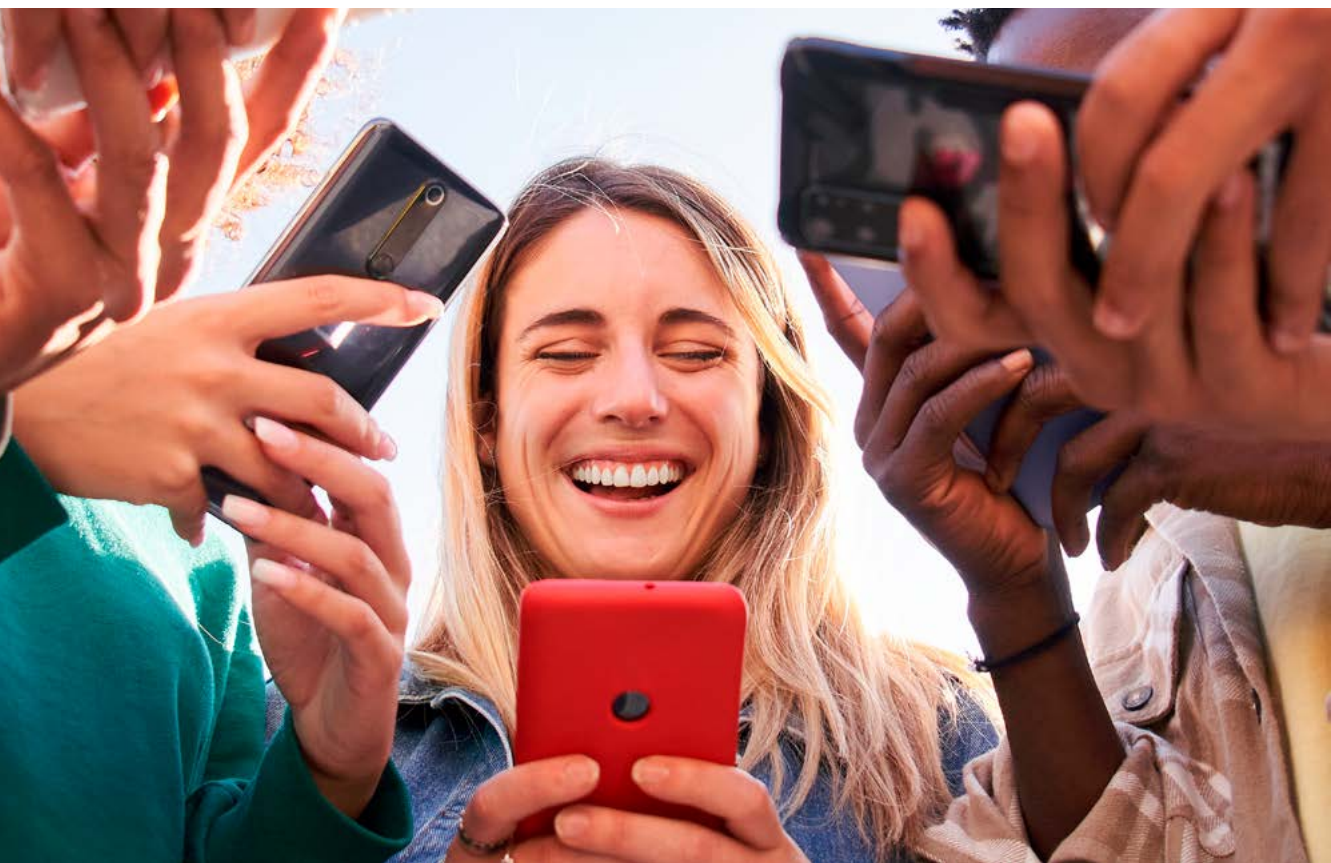
MIKLÓS BÁLINT TÓTH

The worldview of Hungarian youth is fundamentally shaped by the prevailing sense of crisis and uncertainty characteristic of our era, which, in turn, inevitably influences their conceptions of the future. Following an overview of the material conditions and housing preferences of the younger generation, this analysis seeks to present and interpret the findings of research exploring the future outlook of those aged 15–39.

The successive waves of crisis in recent years—most notably the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian–Ukrainian war, and the energy crisis—have collectively undermined societal confidence in the predictability of the future. At the same time, they have significantly reshaped and destabilised individuals' expectations regarding their own life trajectories. Difficulties in anticipating the near and medium-term future are of particular relevance from the perspective of young people, for whom the question of planning assumes heightened importance during this transitional

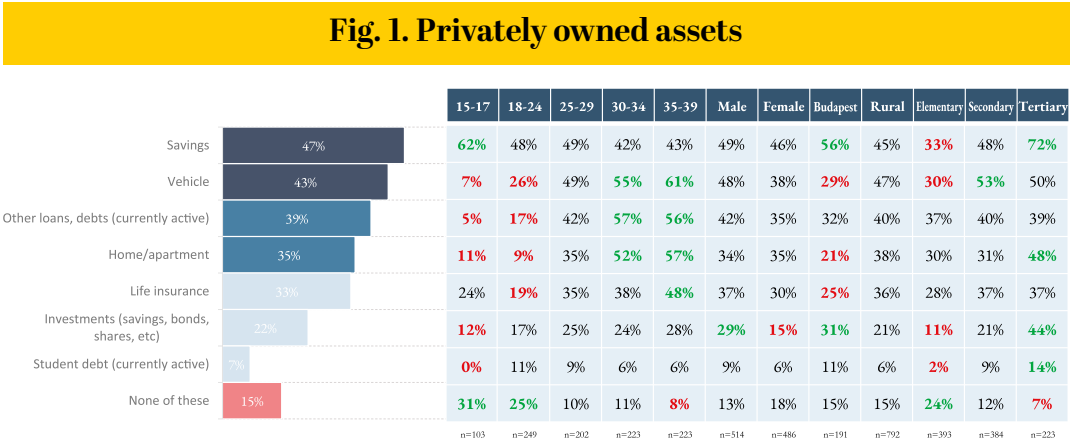
stage of life. In light of the current polycrisis and shifting socio-political conditions, it is especially pertinent to examine the expectations with which young people approach the future, as these perceptions may substantially influence their attitudes and behaviour (Ferreira – Almeida, 2023).

Based on the survey conducted by the Youth Research Institute, a comprehensive picture can be drawn of the financial circumstances and, closely related to them, the future outlook of Hungarian youth. According to the findings, nearly half of respondents—precisely



47%—report having some form of savings (Figure 1). With regard to future financial prospects, it is notable that one in three young people holds a valid life insurance policy, while 22% have some form of investment (such as bank deposits, government bonds, or shares). A total of 43% of respondents report owning a car, while 35% state that they possess a house or apartment.

However, financial flexibility is constrained by debt obligations: 7% of respondents have student loans that they are currently repaying. A considerably larger proportion—four in ten—report having other forms of loans or debt. Finally, 15% of respondents indicated that they possess none of the above-mentioned assets, but also have no outstanding repayment obligations.



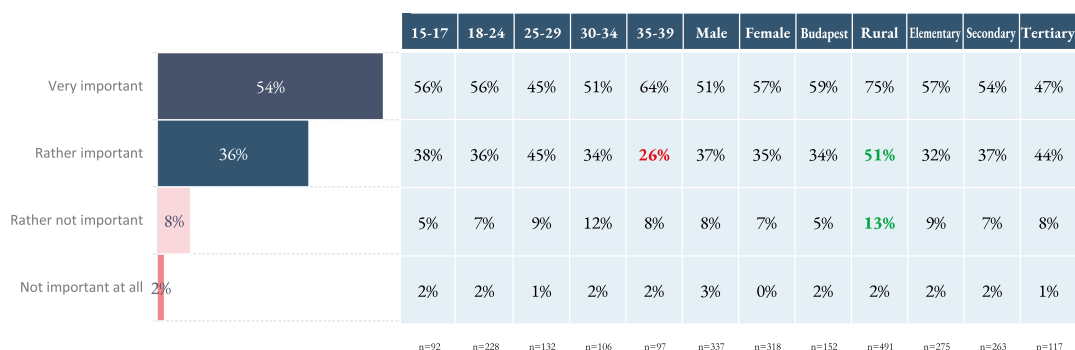
(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 / Question: Do you personally own any of the following?)

Housing problems affecting young people to an even greater extent than other groups (Kocsis, 2022) have recently received increased attention in public discourse. The prioritisation of housing policy on the governmental agenda is also reflected in the launch of the Otthon Start Programme, as well as the announcement of a housing support scheme targeting public sector employees. In connection with this heightened social and policy interest, particularly insightful data emerge from the question examining the importance of owning a privately held residential property.

According to the findings, an overwhelming majority of respondents (90%) consider it important or very important to live in a home that they own, while only one in ten respondents stated that owning property is rather unimportant or not important at all (Figure 2). It is noteworthy that no substantial differences can be identified across the main sociodemographic variables (age group, gender, type of settlement, educational attainment), indicating that young people’s views on this issue are remarkably consistent.



Fig. 2. The importance of owning a home



(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 who do not own their own home / Question: How important do you consider it to have your own home as an adult?)

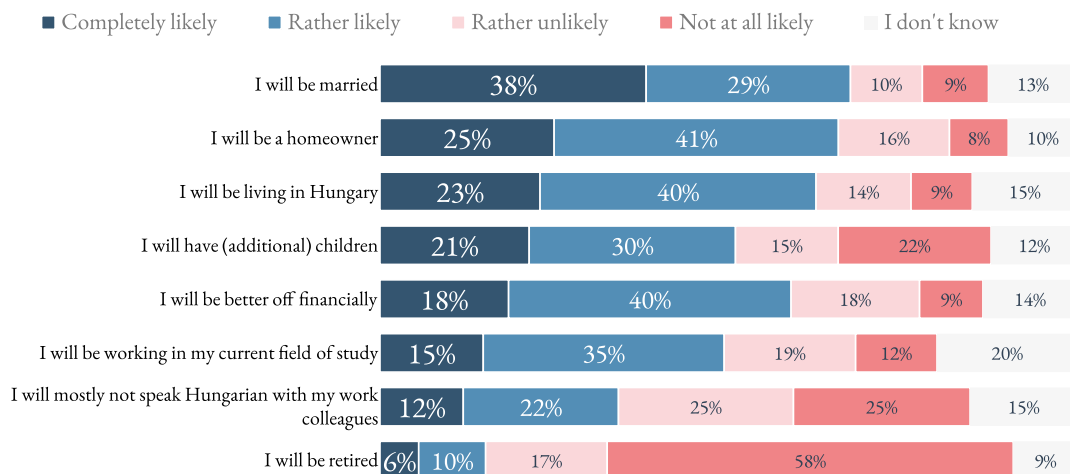
It is reasonably assumed that Hungarian preferences in this regard are linked to the strongly ownership-centred nature of the domestic housing market (RE/MAX Europe, 2025, p. 6), although further investigation is required to determine whether it is social demand that drives the dominance of home ownership, or whether the limited stock of municipal and state-owned rental housing, together with the absence of alternative housing models, conditions actors towards this outcome (Jelinek – Pósfai, 2020, pp. 106–107).

Similarly noteworthy responses were obtained regarding questions concerning key dimensions of future outlooks. The results indicate that the majority of the

younger generation (67%) expect to be married by 2050: 38% consider this scenario fully likely, while 29% regard it as rather likely, and only one in five respondents believes that they will probably not be living in a traditional partnership form a quarter of a century from now (Figure 3).

It is also striking that two-thirds of young people expect that they will own a residential property by that time. This finding suggests that Hungarian youth—who, in European comparison, are among the least satisfied with housing conditions (RE/MAX Europe, 2025, p. 6)—nonetheless hold a notably optimistic view of their future access to housing.

Fig. 3. Visions for 2050, expectations and perceived likelihoods



(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 / Question: How likely do you think it is that the following will be achieved or will occur by 2050?)

A comparable proportion of respondents (63%) believe it is either very or rather likely that they will live in Hungary in the future, while only slightly more than one-fifth expect that they probably will not. With regard to the financial outlook of this age cohort, 58% of participants in the survey assume that, within two and a half decades, they will be living in a significantly better financial situation than at present. Fewer respondents expect to have (additional) children, yet they still constitute an absolute majority (51%). It is noteworthy, however, that 22% of respondents do not consider it likely at all that they will have (additional) children, indicating that generational expectations regarding the future are highly divergent in this respect.

In light of the rapid transformation of skill requirements and the differing employment preferences of the younger generation compared to those of their parents (Youth Research Institute, 2025),

it is particularly important to consider the potential career paths young people envision for themselves. Exactly half of respondents believe that they will most likely work in a field related to their current studies or employment, while nearly one-third expect to be employed in a different occupational area. It is particularly instructive that this question recorded the highest proportion of “don’t know” responses, selected by 20% of participants.

Reflecting the increasingly internationalised nature of the labour market, more than one-third of young people (34%) expect that they will primarily communicate with colleagues in a language other than their mother tongue in their future workplace. At the same time, half of the cohort believe that they will most likely be working in an environment where Hungarian remains the dominant language. Given the age characteristics of the sample, it

is unsurprising that three-quarters of respondents consider it fully or rather unlikely that they will be retired by 2050. Nevertheless, nearly 15% do not plan to remain economically active by the middle of the century, a proportion that is, somewhat surprisingly, not lower even among the youngest age groups (15–17 and 18–24).

Taken together, these findings indicate that despite the prevailing socio-economic uncertainty of our time, Hungarian young people are not only willing to make plans for the future, but a substantial proportion of them also approach key life-course milestones—such as their financial situation or access to housing—with a fundamentally optimistic outlook.



SOURCES

- Ferreira, V. S. – Almeida, A. N. d. (2023): Re-Envisioning Youth Studies in Times of Global Risks: an Introduction. *Youth and Globalization*, 5(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25895745-05010001>. https://brill.com/view/journals/yogo/5/1/article-p1_001.xml?ebody=Article%20details, downloaded on 01 Feb 2026
- Ifjúságkutató Intézet (2025): Legyen izgalmas és változatos – ilyen munkára vágnak a magyar 15–39 évesek. <https://ifjusagkutatoiintezet.hu/sajtokozlemenylegyen-izgalmas-es-valtozatos-ilyen-munkara-vagnak-a-magyar-15-39-ev-esek>, downloaded on 01 Feb 2026

- Jelinek Cs. – Pósfai Zs. (2020): Községi lakhatás: Bérleti lakásszövetkezetek Magyarországon; *Fordulat*, 2020/1, 102–118.
- Kocsis J. B. (2022): A magyarországi fiatalok nyolcadik legégetőbb problémája: lakáshoz jutás, lakásproblémák; In: Pillók Péter – Székely Levente (szerk.): *Kívánj tized! A magyarországi fiatalok nemzedéki önreflexiója és jövőképe*. Nemzeti Ifjúsági Tanács Szövetség, Budapest. 157–174.
- RE/MAX Europe. (2025): European Housing Trend Report. <https://www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/19/Housing-Trend-Report-2025.pdf>, downloaded on 01 Feb 2026

Scrolling Realities: Political Content Consumption on Social Media

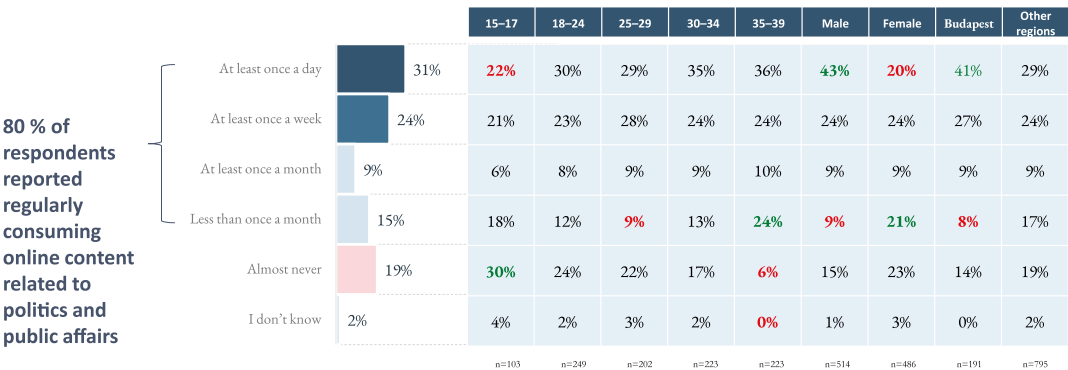
LÁSZLÓ BÁLINT TÓTH

Moral value systems and political attitudes are largely formed in youth and tend to stabilise over the course of adulthood. The social influences shaping young people therefore have long-term implications for political behaviour (Fisher et al., 2018:429). Young people may possess less fully developed conceptions of public affairs; however, this does not mean that they are unable to express political opinions or party affiliations. This is where one of the most significant factors in today’s modern political and information-communication environment comes into play: the use of social media platforms.

80% of Hungarian young people today consume political or public affairs-related content online; one-third do so on a daily basis, while one-fifth engage with such content weekly. Demand for such messages tends to increase with age. At the same time, a key precondition of young people’s democratic engagement is that they perceive engagement with public affairs—both following and shaping them—as emotionally positive

and meaningful. The perceived efficacy of political participation and the level of personal interest in public life thus play a crucial role. Citizens’ internal motivations (such as identity, family, social relationships, morality, and religion) and their democratic experiences (including elections, political content consumption, and participation in public debates) mutually reinforce one another in shaping political self-identification (Levy – Akiva, 2019).

Fig. 1. Consumption of online public affairs and political contents



(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 / Question: How often do you consume online content related to public affairs and politics?)

In terms of young people’s emotional engagement, it is essential to examine the popularity of different content types within their patterns of public information

consumption. Short-form videos and textual content clearly dominate in this regard. The former are particularly widely viewed among younger cohorts:



approximately four-fifths of those aged 15–29 continuously scroll through short videos appearing in their feeds, while two-thirds of the 30–39 age group also frequently access information through such formats. Text-based content is primarily favoured by those aged 25–39, whereas only 46% of 15–17-year-olds report reading public affairs-related posts or online articles. Memes and image-based content enjoy moderate popularity, being more typical among younger respondents and appearing slightly more frequently among men than women. With increasing age, exposure to such content declines. Podcasts and long-form videos generate more modest engagement among young people, although interest in them increases with age.

The use of social media for acquiring political information is relatively widespread among Hungarian youth,

particularly among those with higher levels of education. Nearly half of young respondents engage with such platforms on a daily basis for this purpose. However, this frequency is considerably lower among the 15–17 age group, only one quarter of whom report daily engagement; instead, a majority (46%) consume public affairs content on a weekly basis in online social spaces.

These differences highlight that the transformation of young people's media habits is closely intertwined with the technological and strategic evolution of political communication. Since the mid-2000s, political information environments have sought to keep pace with changes in audience news consumption patterns driven by rapid technological development. The transformation of campaign techniques has been primarily driven by globalisation, the rise of social media,

and the rapid expansion of big data (Tóth, 2022). In 2025, Facebook remains the dominant platform for political information among Hungarian youth, used for this purpose by nearly four-fifths of respondents on average. YouTube ranks as the second most important source, particularly among younger cohorts, especially those aged 15–17.

News portals and traditional media websites also play an important role in the circulation of public information, primarily among the adult population, which reflects more conscious and tradition-oriented news consumption patterns. TikTok and Instagram, by contrast, play a significant role in the political information practices of younger users. Instagram, in particular, is especially popular among those aged 15–24 and is used slightly more frequently by women, although its use declines markedly with age. Platform choice in political content consumption is thus strongly age-dependent: while older users tend to prefer Facebook and news portals, younger cohorts rely more heavily on video-based platforms, particularly YouTube and TikTok.

Social media has redefined the relationship between citizens and political actors by democratising access to public affairs. Owing to its speed, low access costs (internet subscription and data plans), and optional anonymity, online spaces increasingly broaden access to public discourse and enable direct, real-time communication (Theocharis, 2011). At the same time, however, online participation may easily become an illusion of democratic engagement,

amounting merely to symbolic forms of involvement rather than substantive decision-making.

Alongside these developments, campaign strategists now increasingly employ advanced methods for analysing voter data, optimising resources, mobilising support, and enhancing the effectiveness of political communication (Dumbrava, 2021). Algorithmic systems enable personalised content filtering and the rapid, large-scale dissemination of political messages. Consequently, while digitalisation expands citizens' access to information and news consumption opportunities, it also significantly increases the volume of personal data stored about users, posing serious data security risks (Möller et al., 2020). Nevertheless, 40% of young people report feeling secure when engaging in various online activities, and only one quarter express concerns regarding the safety of digital environments.

Young Hungarians do not identify data theft or the unauthorised disclosure of their consumption patterns as the greatest risks. In 2025, the most widely recognised new phenomenon in social media use is the increasing prevalence of AI-generated content. This suggests that AI-based materials are widely recognised by younger generations of platform users. This is hardly surprising, given that the spread of artificial intelligence is already shaping labour market conditions, with particularly significant implications for labour market entrants. Similarly, in education, AI can be seen both as a useful tool and a potential risk factor: while search engines and generative systems can save time and provide access to

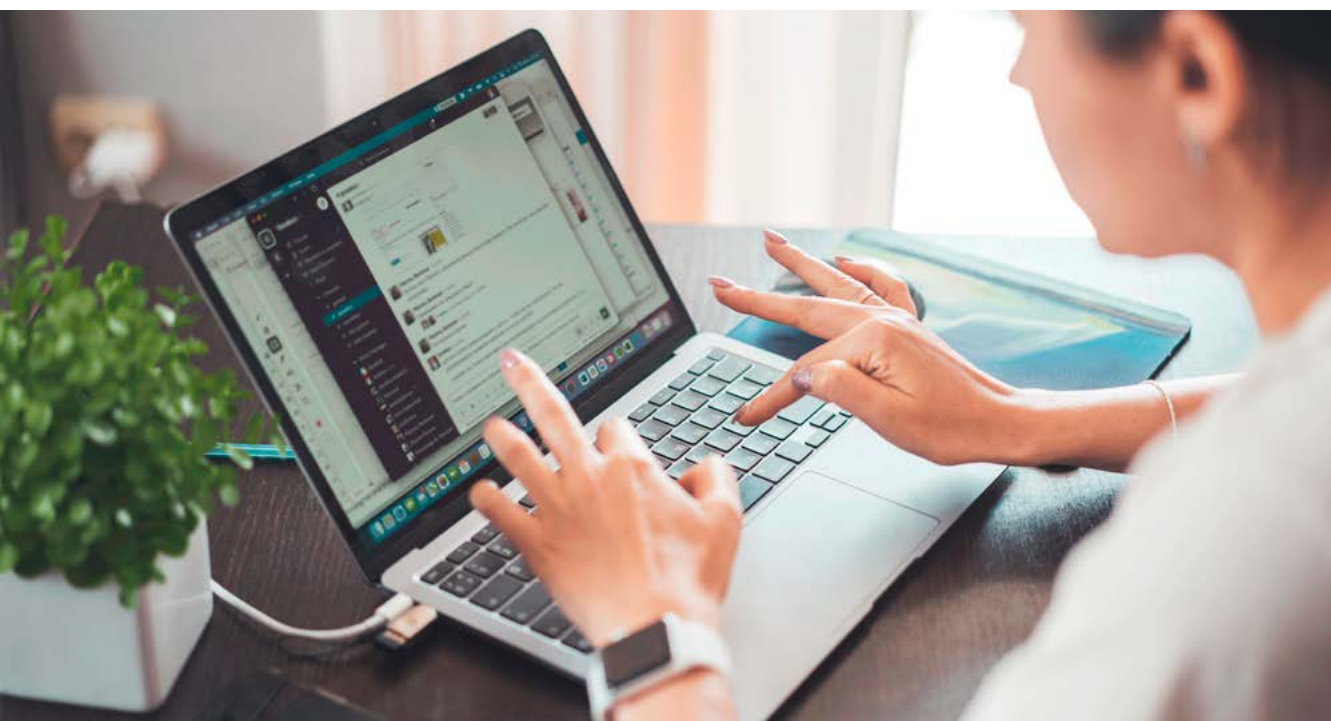
previously unavailable sources of information, they may also facilitate plagiarism and contribute to the marginalisation of creativity (Tóth – Radnai, 2024).

Before the emergence of social media, online campaign communication was largely characterised by one-way information flows. However, the development of internet and data technologies has enabled political actors to map media consumption patterns in detail and disseminate targeted, personalised messages while bypassing traditional gatekeepers (Thorson et al., 2019). Consequently, public affairs content is now perceived as a normal and ubiquitous presence on social media by the majority of Hungarian youth, indicating the increasing politicisation of these platforms. At the same time, young users also frequently encounter content originating from fake profiles and misinformation.

Hungarian youth display a notably critical and conscious attitude towards social media: they are widely aware of

AI-generated content, fake news, political messaging strategies, and inauthentic accounts. Issues of information credibility are strongly present in their online experiences.

Within the social media environment, the boundary between fact and opinion becomes increasingly blurred, while personalised news feeds may trap users in information bubbles. A significant proportion of young Europeans encounter political content exclusively through social media platforms, where misinformation can spread without effective verification. Most EU citizens aged 15–24 follow not direct news sources but influencers—content creators who interpret and reframe news. Algorithmic filtering creates so-called echo chambers without feedback mechanisms, narrowing informational horizons and, in extreme cases, drawing users into endless “rabbit holes” (Laaninen, 2024). This reduces exposure to opposing viewpoints and corrective information. At the same time, the professional and ethical constraints



of political journalism are weakened, as virtually anyone can publish public affairs content to a wide audience without oversight, now even with the assistance of artificial intelligence (Hajdú – Tóth, 2022).

In 2025, Hungarian young people most commonly (66%) rely on explicitly political posts in social media as their primary source of public affairs information. This practice becomes increasingly prevalent with age: it characterises 57% of those aged 15–17 and rises to 74%

among those aged 30–34. Men and Budapest-based respondents are significantly more active in this respect than women and those living outside the capital. Among graduates and those with secondary education, engagement with political posts is particularly high (76% and 71%, respectively), whereas only slightly more than half of respondents with primary education pay attention to such content. Overall, 53% of young respondents also report reading comments associated with political posts.

Fig. 2. Social media activity and frequency

		15-17	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	Male	Female	Budapest	Rural	Elementary	Secondary	Tertiary
Browsing/reading posts of political content	66%	57%	61%	69%	74%	62%	74%	57%	76%	63%	54%	71%	76%
Reading comments related to posts of political content	53%	41%	50%	57%	59%	52%	58%	47%	59%	51%	47%	55%	59%
Comment on/share posts of political content	10%	6%	6%	6%	12%	16%	13%	6%	6%	11%	12%	8%	9%
Blocking/cancelling friends for posts of political content	7%	1%	5%	11%	10%	7%	7%	7%	8%	7%	4%	9%	9%
None of these	21%	32%	27%	18%	14%	18%	14%	28%	15%	22%	27%	19%	14%
		n=93	n=220	n=184	n=207	n=219	n=473	n=449	n=179	n=727	n=348	n=360	n=214

(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 who use social media / Question: Which of the following activities do you carry out on social media, at any frequency?)

On this basis, patterns of political content consumption not only reflect habits of information acquisition, but also anticipate divergent opportunities for young people’s engagement in public life. In addition to demographic factors—such as age and educational attainment—social networks and certain personality dimensions also play a role in shaping the emerging generations’ commitment to public affairs. Naturally, beyond processes of socialisation and generational effects, the characteristics

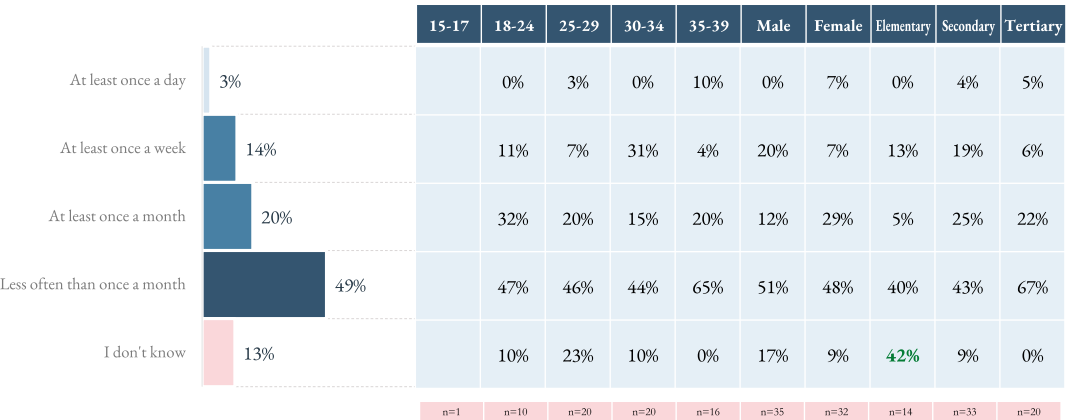
of the institutional environment, the features of the party system, structures of interest representation, levels of social trust, identity attachments, and the degree of religiosity likewise exert an influence (Levy – Akiva, 2019). Nevertheless, it is evident that interpersonal relationships, through debate and diversity, may also serve as a source of motivation for fostering more active political participation among young people, including on online platforms (Hajdú – Tóth, 2022: 86).

Although it is increasingly observable at the international level that young people primarily articulate their interests and political opinions in the online sphere (Tóth – Radnai, 2026), active forms of online political participation—namely commenting on, sharing, or re-sharing posts on public affairs—are less characteristic of Hungarian youth. On average, 10% of Hungarians aged between 15 and 40 engage in such activities, with pronounced differences across age groups and between genders: those aged 30–39 and men are more than twice as likely to comment on or share political content on their social media profiles as those under 30 or women. Reading comment threads, however, is far more widespread among young people: 39% do so daily, while a further 38%

engage in this activity at least weekly, scrolling through comments attached to political content on social media platforms.

In Hungary, it is very rare among those under 40 for online political expression to take the more extreme form of blocking acquaintances or unfollowing them on social platforms because of the content they share. By their own account, those aged 15–17 never engage in such behaviour, while older respondents typically do so less frequently than once a month (and even among them, only every second individual). Consequently, Hungarian youths’ political activity on social media is manifested primarily in passive content consumption. Active contributions and conflictual reactions occur only sporadically.

Fig. 3. Blocking or unfriending someone due to a political post



(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 who block/unfriend people for posting political content (small sample size) / Q: How often do you block/unfriend people for posting political content?)

The transformation of societal value systems is a gradual process, profoundly shaped by experiences acquired during

youth. Political attitudes are partly inherited and partly learned; however, through social influences they remain continuously

open to modification throughout the life course (Fisher et al., 2018: 430–431). With regard both to our social relationships and to our everyday orientation in the world, online communal spaces can be regarded as among the most decisive factors of our time. The future of political participation is determined by today's youth; accordingly, their social, economic and political inclusion constitutes a fundamental precondition for the democratic functioning of states.

The majority of Hungarian young people consume online public affairs

content, primarily in the form of short videos and texts, often via social media platforms. Although many report feeling safe online, a strong critical attitude is evident towards misinformation and AI-generated content. At the same time, digital political engagement among Hungarian youth tends to be largely confined to the reception of information. Youth, therefore, are best understood as consumers of political content, while the functioning of democracy should be approached as a process unfolding across generations (Gordon, 2008)

SOURCES

- Dumbrava, C. (2021): Key social media risks to democracy. European Parliamentary Research Service.
- Fisher J., Fieldhouse E., Franklin M. N., Gibson R., Cantijoch M., and Wlezien C. (2018): The Routledge Handbook of Elections, Voting Behavior and Public Opinion. Routledge.
- Gordon, H. R. (2008): Gendered Paths to Teenage Political Participation: Parental Power, Civic Mobility, and Youth Activism. *Gender and Society*, 22(1).
- Hajdú, A. és Tóth, B. L. (2022): Politikai aktivitás és generációváltás kérdése. In *HorizontOn* (83–97).
- Laaninen, T. (2024): Youth, social media and the European elections. European Parliamentary Research Service.
- Levy, B. and Akiva T. (2019): Motivating Political Participation Among Youth: An Analysis Factors Related to Adolescents' Political Engagement. *Educational Theory and Practice Faculty Scholarship*. 31.
- Möller, J., van de Velde, R. N., Merten, L., and Puschmann C. (2019): Explaining Online News Engagement Based on Browsing Behavior: Creatures of Habit? *Social Science Computer Review*, 38(5).
- Theocharis, Y. (2011): Young people, political participation and online postmaterialism in Greece. *New Media & Society*, 13(2).
- Thorson, K., Cotter, K., Medeiros, M., and Pak, C. (2019): Algorithmic inference, political interest, and exposure to news and politics on Facebook. *Routledge Information, Communication & Society*.
- Tóth, B. L. (2022): Véleménybuborékok harca: a közösségi média szerepe a politikai szocializációban. *Corvinák*. <https://corvinak.hu/velemen/2022/03/01/velemenybuborekok-harca-a-kozossegi-media-szerepe-a-politikai-szocializacioban> (downloaded on 2 Feb 2026.)
- Tóth, B. L., & Radnai, F. (2024): Nemzetközi környezet. In *Ifjúság '23* (10–15). Ifjúságkutató Intézet.
- Tóth, B. L., & Radnai, F. (2026): International Outlook [2025]. In *Youth'25: Report on Youth Affairs* (9–13). Youth Research Institute.







Manipulation and Credibility in Social Media

GEORGINA KISS-KOZMA

The social impact of technological change

“Speak the truth, not merely what is real”, we may quote Attila József, the famous Hungarian poet here. Yet today we may reasonably ask whether we still know what is true and what is merely real. Successive technological revolutions—combining cognitive, agricultural and industrial elements—have repeatedly reshaped the fundamental principles governing our societies. Each major technological shift has brought with it a new social order: whereas rigid hierarchies, caste divisions and unequal rights between groups were once taken for granted, it now appears obsolete that individuals should suffer legal disadvantage on the basis of their place of birth, gender or skin colour.

At present, it seems that we are once again moving towards a form of technological singularity (Kurzweil, 2024). The question is no longer whether the genie can be put back into the bottle, but rather how we might coexist with these transformations. To what extent will they reshape our core social concepts, and how will they alter the roles of those traditionally regarded as custodians of knowledge—teachers, physicians and politicians? The professional competencies and personal attributes expected of politicians have already changed significantly since the 1990s; it is therefore unsurprising that the gap between younger and older generations’ expectations of politics and political actors continues to widen. Whereas politics once operated on the basis of a relatively unified social contract with the electorate, it must now offer differentiated responses to social groups situated in diverse life stages and circumstances.

A frequently voiced argument holds that the role of expertise is increasingly

being supplanted by the question of credibility. Credibility today extends beyond political competence or discursive ability to encompass the entirety of a politician’s personal attributes, including their capacity to establish emotional and affective connections with citizens. In this sense, politics has become an arena of competition for credibility (D. Mor, 2012). At the same time, the distinction between possessing knowledge and merely possessing information remains fundamental. The rapid transformation of communication has led many to assume—mistakenly—that information alone is sufficient. In reality, wisdom remains indispensable.

Young people are strongly influenced by global, predominantly liberal ideologies. An increasing number are willing to forgo personal aspirations—such as starting a family—in order to mitigate the environmental consequences of overpopulation (Youth Research Institute, 2026). The acceptance of liberal narratives as objective truths can be traced

to a set of interrelated factors (Funk – Sclofsky, 2021; Schwarzmantel, 2008). While considerable attention has been paid to the negative consequences of rapidly evolving communication technologies, less emphasis has been placed on the significant decline in the role of authority within society. With the fading of the “Gutenberg galaxy” and the proliferation of the internet and social media, access to expert information has become universal. As a result, trust in leaders and experts has gradually eroded: individuals no longer rely exclusively on doctors, teachers or politicians, as information on virtually any topic can be obtained online.

The spread of artificial intelligence has further intensified this process, with

growing numbers of individuals using such tools even for self-diagnosis in medical contexts (Aboueid et al., 2019; Mentzou et al., 2025). Contrary to early expectations, the expansion of the internet has not led to the democratisation of knowledge, but rather to its relativisation. When authority functioned as a legitimate source of knowledge, the world appeared more predictable, and sharply antagonistic parallel “truths” did not crystallise to the same extent. Today, however, societies have become increasingly polarised, partly as a consequence of these developments. This crisis of credibility exposes young people to a wide range of competing ideologies, fundamentally reshaping both social discourse and political culture.

Social Media, manipulation and fake profiles

Rapidly expanding online social networks (OSNs) have become integral to users’ everyday digital presence, facilitating not only the sharing of information and interpersonal interaction, but also various forms of social influence. According to Statista, by 2025 the number of users of Facebook had exceeded 3 billion, followed by YouTube with approximately 2.5 billion users and Instagram with around 2 billion.

However, the open and interactive nature of online social networks has also created opportunities for manipulation and abuse; their darker side is increasingly associated with the proliferation of fake profiles. These are artificially created or manipulated

identities designed primarily to deceive and influence users, shape public opinion, disseminate disinformation, and, in some cases, facilitate cyberattacks. As online social networks have grown exponentially, so too have the tactics employed by malicious actors (Kareem – Bhaya W., 2018; Sarfraz et al., 2025). It is therefore essential to examine the presence of fake profiles within online political communication spaces, although it should be noted that the repertoire of online political manipulation extends far beyond this phenomenon.

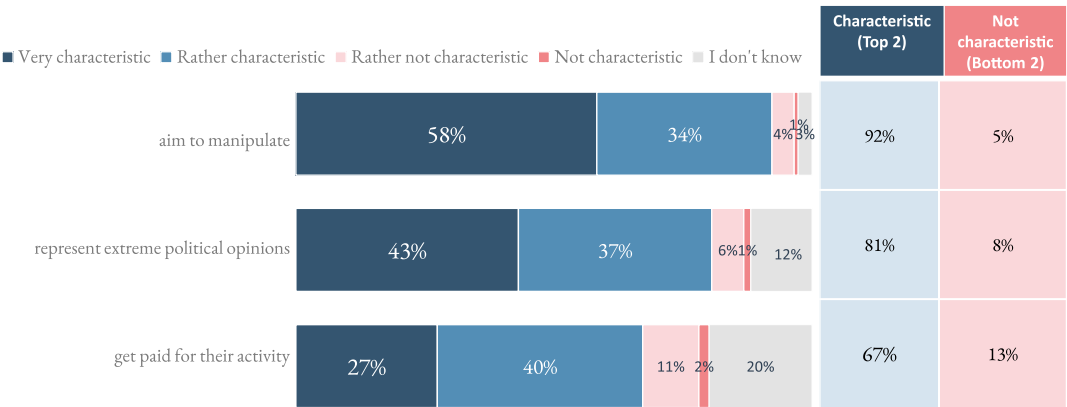
Young people and young adults in Hungary aged 15–39 are aware of the presence of fake profiles in the comment

sections of politically themed posts on social media. On a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5—where 1 indicates the complete absence of fake profiles and 5 suggests that nearly all commenters are such—the average score was 2.94, slightly below the midpoint of the scale. A relative plurality of respondents (30%) tend to believe that fake profiles are either absent or constitute only a small proportion of commenters. At the same

time, approximately one-quarter of respondents consider a more substantial share of commenters to be inauthentic.

Among those able to form an opinion on the presence of fake profiles, a clear majority identify manipulation as their primary purpose (92% consider this very or somewhat characteristic), followed by the promotion of extreme political views (81%), and the receipt of financial compensation for such activities (67%).

Fig. 1. Characterisation of fake profiles on social media platforms



(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 / Question: In your opinion, how typical is it of fake profiles that they...?)

Political interest and opinion leaders

The political interest and behaviour of young people in Hungary have long been a focus of domestic youth research, with broad agreement that the family—particularly parents—plays a pivotal role in their political socialisation (Szabó – Oross, 2021; Székely, 2024). The transformation of young people’s content consumption habits draws attention to the growing importance of social media in shaping

both political information acquisition and behavioural patterns. The role of content creators, influencers, humour and personal narratives in political content consumption has become increasingly pronounced.

This trend is reflected in the findings: young people most frequently follow musicians (56%), comedians (54%), influencers (49%) and celebrities (40%) who regularly share political content on



social media. Among those who follow pages that consistently post political content, the opinions of political analysts are regarded as the most credible (46%), whereas the views of well-known public figures—namely celebrities (15%) and influencers (23%)—are considered the least reliable.

According to the dominant theoretical framework underpinning international research, the civil sector comprises non-profit organisations that operate independently of government, function outside the framework of the state apparatus, do not distribute profits to owners or managers, are self-governing, and rely significantly on voluntary contributions. Civil society organisations are characterised by five core criteria: institutionalisation, independence from government, self-governance, the prohibition of profit distribution, and voluntarism (Salamon – Anheier, 1999). This conceptualisation is also reflected in public opinion: 70% of respondents consider the independence of opinion leaders to derive primarily from their autonomy from government and political parties. Independence from the institutions of the European Union and from international organisations was regarded as important

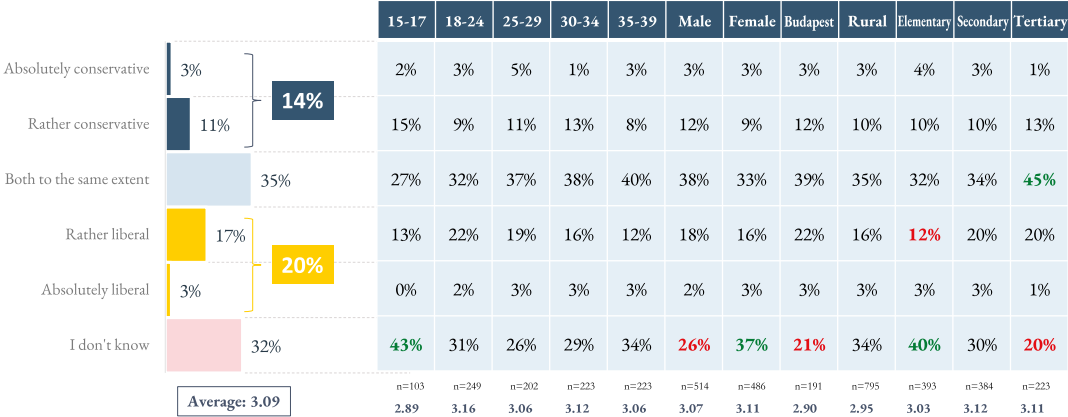
or somewhat important by an identical proportion of respondents (57%).

Among young people, similar proportions report knowing and not knowing an opinion leader whom they consider independent and objective according to their own criteria (35% and 36%, respectively). Marked differences emerge across age groups: only around one-fifth (19%) of the youngest cohort (aged 15–17) can identify such a figure, whereas the highest proportion is found among those aged 35–39.

Findings from a previous study conducted in 2023 indicate that the majority of Hungarians aged 15–39 perceive social media algorithms as biased (60% consider them rather or entirely biased). At the same time, respondents also detect a predominance of liberal orientation on these platforms: 50% regard them as rather or entirely liberal, while 29% perceive them as rather or entirely conservative (Kiss-Kozma – Székely, 2023). The perception of liberal predominance is likewise evident in the present study: the majority of public actors who express views on political issues are perceived by respondents as rather or entirely liberal, whereas those considered conservative are identified at a lower rate (20% versus 14%).



Fig. 2. Values of well-known political opinion leaders



(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 / Question: In your opinion, which political value system do most well-known public figures who also express opinions on political issues tend to represent?)

Influencers and political opinion formation

The role of influencers in public affairs has become increasingly prominent within political discourse, particularly with regard to their function in shaping political opinions. In recent years, they have repeatedly demonstrated the ability to translate attention gained in the virtual sphere into tangible outcomes in the physical world. Notable examples include the rapid and highly successful fundraising campaign for Zente, a young boy suffering from SMA1, as well as the “influencer protest” related to child protection, held on 16 February 2024.

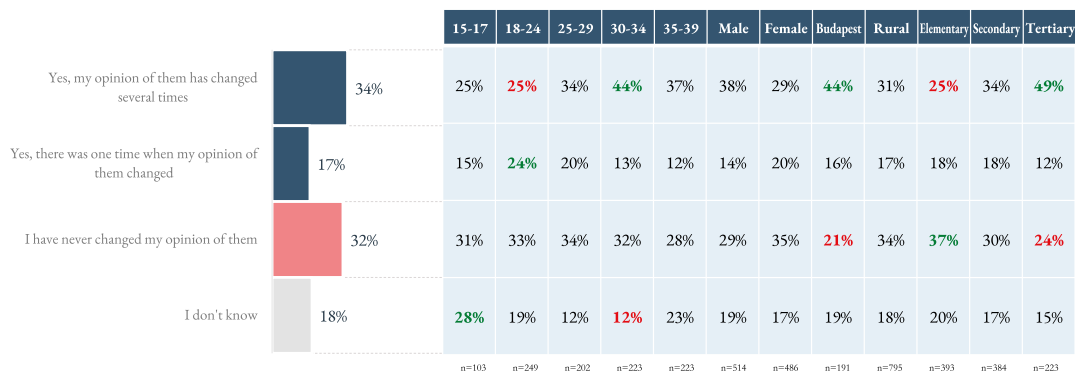
According to earlier research, the majority of Hungarian youth (66%) follow at least one influencer. At the same time,

they remain divided on the question of how credible they consider well-known personalities who advocate for various social causes (30% regard them as credible, while 28% do not). A higher proportion of young people believe it is inappropriate for the content creators they follow to take a stance on political issues (36% versus 23%) (Székely, 2025).

The findings of the present study point in a similar direction: half of young respondents report that their opinion of a public figure or well-known personality has changed at least once after becoming aware of their political views, while only one-third indicate that such information has had no effect on their perceptions.



Fig. 3. Change in personal political opinion



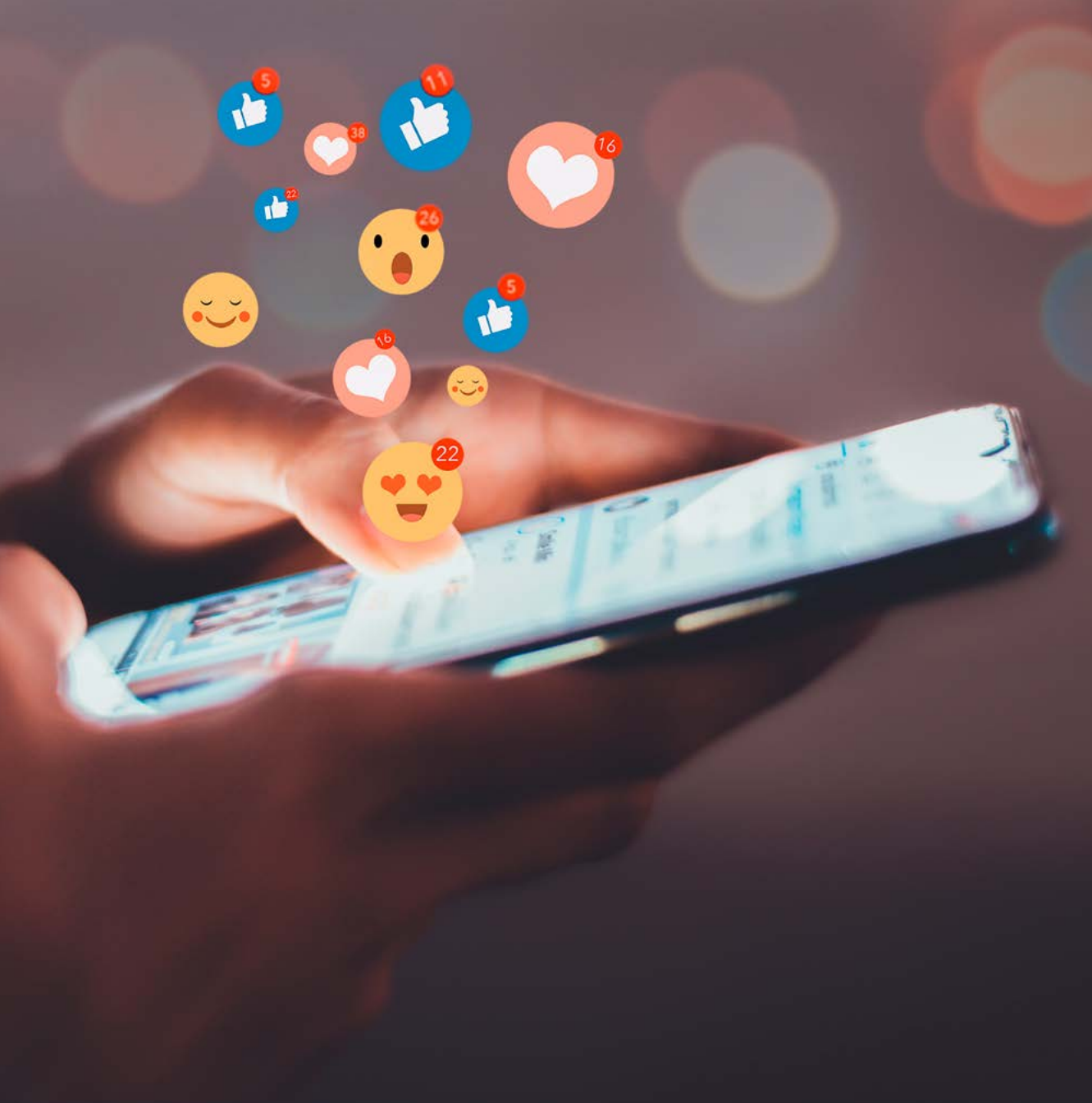
(Source: Youth Research Institute, 2025 Base: N=1000, Hungarians aged 15-39 / Question: Have you ever changed your opinion about a public figure or well-known person after learning about their political views?)

SOURCES

- Aboueid, S. – Liu, R. H. – Desta, B. N. – Chaurasia, A. – Ebrahim, S. (2019): The Use of Artificially Intelligent Self-Diagnosing Digital Platforms by the General Public: Scoping Review. *JMIR medical informatics*, 7(2), e13445. <https://doi.org/10.2196/13445>
- D. Mor, B. (2012): Credibility talk in public diplomacy. *Review of International Studies*. 2012. 38(2):393-422. doi:10.1017/S0260210511000489
- Funk K. – Sclofsky S. (2021): The Liberal Ideology: On Intellectual Pluralism and the Marginalization of Marxism in US Political Science. *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 2021. 54(3):593-597. doi:10.1017/S1049096521000342
- Kiss-Kozma, G. – Székely, L. (2023) *Youth+ - Five observations on 15-39-year-olds in Hungary*. Budapest: Youth Research Institute, MCC. ISBN: 9786156221070 ISBN: 9786156221087
- Kurzweil, R. (2024): *The Singularity Is Nearer: When We Merge with AI*. Penguin.
- Mentzou, A. – Rogers, A. – Carvalho, E. – Daly, A. – Malone, M. – Kerasidou, X. (2025): Artificial Intelligence in Digital Self-Diagnosis Tools: A Narrative Overview of Reviews, *Mayo Clinic Proceedings: Digital Health*, 3(3). ISSN 2949-7612, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mcpdig.2025.100242>;
- Salamon, L. M. – Anheier, H. (1999): *Szektor születik II. Összefoglaló egy nemzetközi non-profit kutatás második szakaszáról*. Budapest: Civitalis Egyesület: 12–13. Letöltés helye: <https://mek.oszk.hu/14400/14460/14460.pdf>, downloaded on 28 Jan 2026
- Sarfraz, A., Ahmad, A., Zeshan, F., Hamid, M., & Alshalali, T. A. N. (2025). Unmasking deception: detection of fake profiles in online social ecosystems. *Journal of Big Data*, 12(1), 214. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40537-025-01254-y>
- Schwarzmantel, J. (2008): The hegemony of liberalism. In: *The hegemony of liberalism*. SAGE Publications Ltd, 49 – 68. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446213247.n3>
- Szabó, A. – Oross, D. (2021): Változó világ – állandó értékek. Az ifjúság politikai érdeklődésének és politikai értékrendjének változása In: Székely, Levente (szerk.) *Magyar fiatalok a koronavírus-járvány idején: Tanulmánykötet a Magyar Ifjúság Kutatás 2020 eredményeiről*. Budapest: Enigma 2001 Kiadó és Médiaszolgáltató Kft, 211–236.
- Székely, L. (2024): Parázs a hamu alatt – éled-e az új csendes generáció? *Magyar Tudomány*, 185(7): 855-862.
- Székely, L. (2025): Influenzszerek és hatásuk a fiatalok gondolkodására In: Kiss-Kozma, G. (szerk.) *Fénytörésben: Ifjúságképek az empirikus adatok tükrében* Budapest: Ifjúságkutató Intézet, 12–19.



Notes on Methodology



The Youth Research Institute study examined young people in Hungary, with data collection conducted in November 2025. Responses were gathered through online, self-administered questionnaire-based interviews (CAWI), involving a total of 1,000 respondents aged 15–39, selected using a representative sampling procedure.

The target group was reached through online research panels. Participants aged 15–17 were recruited via a parental sample, with parental consent. In 88% of cases, responses were submitted using mobile phones.

The Youth Research Institute has produced a highly timely and much-needed volume examining young people's generational conflicts, sense of security, perceptions of the future, social media consumption habits, and their relationship to opinion leaders and manipulation. A major strength of the publication lies in its solid empirical foundation, its accessible language, and its focus on the most pressing issues.

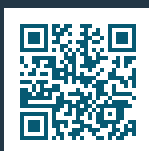
The perceived rise in intergenerational tensions can be linked to the erosion of traditional communities and to differences in patterns of social media consumption. One notable finding of the study is that, in expectations of leadership qualities, commitment to the national cause ranks far ahead of mainstream liberal thinking, indicating a shift in the value orientation of Hungarian youth away from global ideologies towards nation-state-centred thinking. The desire for a sovereigntist leadership style is associated with declining trust in EU institutions. Perhaps a surprising finding of the study is that, despite the prevailing climate of uncertainty, young people are fundamentally optimistic about the future, and nearly two-thirds believe that Hungary will remain their home base for the long term.

What is far less surprising, however, is that eighty per cent of young people in Hungary consume online public affairs content, one-third on a daily basis and one-fifth on a weekly basis. For political orientation, they rely primarily on Facebook and YouTube, although among the youngest age groups TikTok and Instagram are becoming increasingly dominant. The study also highlights the formation of media bubbles among young people.

The overwhelming reach of social media networks is illustrated by the fact that Facebook has 3 billion users worldwide, YouTube 2.5 billion, and Instagram 2 billion. The chapter on the societal impact of technological change warns of the risks posed by the rapid rise of artificial intelligence, the declining authority of traditional institutions, and the difficulties younger generations face in navigating between increasingly polarised and parallel realities.

The Youth Research Institute's thought-provoking publication is also instructive for the wider public, as it addresses fundamental questions that will shape our future.

István Stumpf, PhD
Széchenyi Prize-winning university
professor



YOUTH
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE



www.ifjusagkutatoiintezet.hu