



GLOBSEC TRENDS 2023

COUNTRY REPORT
HUNGARY



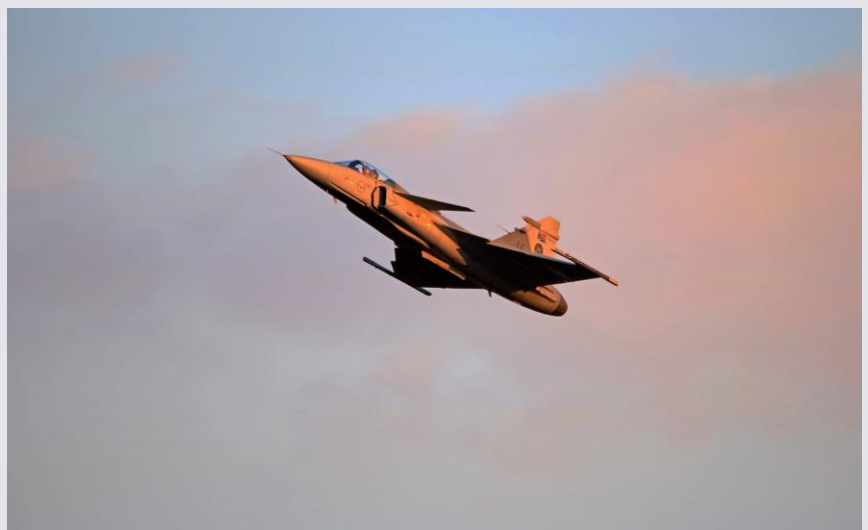
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2023, GLOBSEC conducted a poll, surveying 1000 people in eight Central and Eastern European countries, including Hungary, to analyse societal attitudes on various topics such as the EU, NATO, the war in Ukraine, and health, among others. Based on the detailed results in Hungary, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- **A society divided by party politics:** The data from Hungary reveals that the country's voters tend to align with the rhetoric of their respective political leaders on most issues. The blame for the war in Ukraine, for example, is largely attributed to either Russia or Ukraine/the West based on party preferences. Undecided voters, at the time of polling, were more closely aligned with opposition voters in terms of attitudes in most cases.
- **Some degree of national consensus remains:** Despite Hungarian political forces moving away from seeking consensus, there are still some basic issues that most Hungarians largely agree on. These include the country's membership in the European Union and NATO, recognizing the benefits of NATO membership, and a preference for a democracy based on equality, human rights, freedom, and the rule of law.
- **Reluctance about NATO Article 5:** Although Hungarians are generally enthusiastic about NATO membership and understand its significance in lowering the chances of a foreign attack on Hungary, they are more hesitant about agreeing to defend one of their NATO neighbours in case of an attack. This reluctance persists even though mainstream political forces are not openly questioning Hungary's obligations under Article 5. It is possible that the ruling party's pro-peace narratives regarding the war in Ukraine might be interpreted more broadly by some voters.
- **Varied views on partnerships:** Both the ruling party's voters and the opposition's supporters view Germany as the country's main strategic partner, but the former are much less likely to see it that way. Interestingly, Fidesz voters consider China almost as important as Germany, which reflects the effectiveness of the ruling party's narratives in promoting the Chinese partnership to its supporters. In contrast, the opposition's backers rarely choose Beijing as one of their country's top two partners.
- **Divergent perspectives on the war:** As previously mentioned, Hungarians assign blame for the war in Ukraine based on their party preferences. This pattern also extends to views on sanctions against Russia and weapon deliveries to Ukraine. Undecided voters and those who do not reveal their party preferences tend to align with pro-sanction views but are strongly against weapon deliveries.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Agreement on democracy but not its label:** Hungarians generally agree that democracy based on equality, human rights, freedoms, and the rule of law is beneficial for their country. However, when asked about liberal democracy, they split along party-political lines, indicating the impact of prevalent anti-liberal narratives in the Hungarian information space.
- **No hatred against LGBTI+ people:** The majority of Hungarians do not align with the ruling party's narratives on LGBTI+ people. Only 37% consider it an immoral and decadent ideology, while 56% believe that their rights, such as marriage, should be guaranteed.
- **Belief in "own" disinformation:** Hungarians tend to believe disinformation that targets the opposing political side.¹ Fidesz voters are more likely than opposition supporters to agree that the opposition is being paid to represent foreign interests in their political agenda. On the other hand, opposition backers are more likely to believe disinformation about Prime Minister Viktor Orbán receiving psychiatric treatment at a private clinic in Graz.
- **Lacking trust:** Trust in the Hungarian government and the National Assembly has declined by 16 percentage points each over a 12-month period, likely influenced by the economic challenges the country faces. However, the ruling party's voters continue to support the cabinet. More concerning is the free fall in trust in the armed forces, particularly among opposition and undecided voters, even though the institution was previously considered above political divides. Mounting criticism of the cabinet's handling of military affairs appears to have significantly affected public attitudes.
- **Differing media consumption habits:** Hungarians tend to consume media differently based on their party affiliations. Supporters of the ruling party regularly watch or read media outlets considered biased towards Fidesz, while opposition voters tend to consume independent media. Although media consumption habits are influenced by pre-existing political views, the substantial volume of potentially misleading content published by certain outlets likely contributes to the preservation of societal attitudes.

[1] The narratives and the relevant results are explained on page 15-16.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Common points of understanding must be found.** The ruling party and the opposition should formulate a basic understanding of Hungary's place in the world, and if such an understanding exists, it needs to be communicated to Hungarians frequently. The foundation of this understanding can be Hungary's membership in the EU and NATO, along with the commitment to fulfil the basic requirements of these organisations, such as fully observing Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.
- 2. New rules are needed for certain public institutions.** Hungary requires public institutions and public figures that all citizens can support. Restoring trust in the army and the presidency over the long-term necessitates ensuring that the Minister of Defence and the President have no past or present party affiliations at the time of election, at the very least. Parties nominating the President should also consider nominating someone with no history of previous high-profile public political comments.
- 3. The public media needs to feature more opposition voices.** There should be legal regulations on the amount of screen time opposition politicians must receive on public media, including news programs. The representation of parties should be based on an average of various national/municipal public opinion polls to prevent the public broadcaster from circumventing rules by disproportionately representing obscure political forces.
- 4. Tailor the fight for democracy to Hungarians' views.** Pro-democratic forces need to adapt their narratives to how Hungarians perceive democracy. There is no need to refer to liberal/illiberal democracy; instead, Hungarians should be explained how their current democratic system deviates from standards in terms of equality, upholding human rights and freedoms, and the rule of law.
- 5. Local media needs support.** To build societal resilience in Hungary, media operating in specific regions/municipalities in the country require more support. These outlets focusing on local issues could better earn the trust of local populations as they address matters that are closest to them.
- 6. Focus on solutions, not the problem.** Campaigns in Hungary by pro-West actors need to shift their focus from describing the problem to proposing solutions that can improve the lives of Hungarians and highlight the benefits of the country's association with the West. These efforts should be targeted particularly at Hungarian citizens with a lower level of education, especially those without a high school leaving exam (Matura).



Not the outliers

GLOBSEC's most recent poll revealed that the Central and Eastern European region (comprising the eight surveyed countries: Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia) remains firmly committed to their place in Western organisations (EU and NATO).² The region also strongly supports Ukraine in its fight against the Russian invasion. However, there are reasons for concern as well, with some disinformation narratives being widely shared by the populations of certain countries, including those related to sanctions against Russia or weapons deliveries to Ukraine.

GLOBSEC Trends 2023 highlighted that out of the eight surveyed countries, Hungarian society is not the most striking outlier in terms of pro-Kremlin attitudes. Bulgarian and Slovakian respondents were substantially more likely to agree with narratives favourable to the Kremlin and directed against the West.

Overall, it is clear that the CEE region wants to remain a part of Western organisations. On average, 79% of CEE respondents supported their country's NATO membership, but the organisation only enjoyed the backing of 58% of Bulgarians and Slovaks. While Slovak support fell by 14 percentage points over 12 months, Bulgarians became more supportive of the Alliance during the same period of time.

The question of Ukraine is more controversial. On average, 64% of respondents placed primary blame on Russia for the war. However, this opinion did not constitute an absolute majority in Bulgaria and Slovakia, where only 44% (a decrease of 6 percentage points from 2022) and 40% (a decrease of 11 percentage points from 2022) of citizens, respectively, held Russia responsible for the invasion. On the other hand, the proportion of citizens blaming Russia increased in Hungary by 6 percentage points, from 48% to 54%, meaning that Hungary joined the list of countries where the absolute majority considers Russia to be the main culprit.

While there have been positive developments, it does not mean that Hungarians are not susceptible to disinformation narratives concerning their country's allies, alliances, the war in Ukraine, or even healthcare. This susceptibility is unsurprising, considering the fact that a media conglomerate of nearly 500 outlets³ and the public broadcaster⁴ uncritically repeat the ruling party's rhetoric, which has been criticised for including unreliable or misleading claims, and for favouring the Kremlin's viewpoints.⁵

For example, only 54% of Hungarians agreed that "Economic sanctions against Russia work and should be in place until Russia withdraws its soldiers from Ukraine," which is lower than the 59% average for the entire CEE sample, largely due to strongly anti-sanctions views among Slovak and Bulgarian respondents. However, the government's long-repeated anti-sanctions narratives⁶ do not enjoy majority backing. Yet, their rhetoric is more broadly supported on another issue: 57% of Hungarians agreed that "By providing military equipment and weapons to Ukraine, the West is provoking Russia and bringing itself closer to the war."

[2] <https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/publications/globsec-trends-2023-united-we-still-stand>

[3] <https://english.atlatszo.hu/2019/06/30/data-visualization-this-is-what-the-pro-government-news-media-looks-like/>

[4] <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2022/hungary>

[5] https://politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article_read=1&article_id=3004

[6] <https://telex.hu/english/2022/10/18/eu-sanctions-depicted-as-actual-bomb-in-hungarian-governments-anti-sanctions-propaganda>



Following their ‘leader’: highlighting societal divisions

The following publication will take a closer look at how Hungarians think about the EU, NATO, the war in Ukraine, and their belief in both factual and misleading narratives. The data from the polling in Hungary makes one thing clear almost immediately: party political factors are the single most important determinant of how Hungarian respondents view the world. This is evident when comparing the views exhibited by the ruling party's voters and those of individual opposition forces.

To highlight this trend, we merged the political parties that took part in the opposition cooperation in the 2022 general election if they were backed by at least 1% of the sample (including those who said they would vote for a 'cooperation of opposition forces'). After this exercise, the sample included 289 Fidesz voters and 317 opposition voters. Then, the views of this new, "merged" government-critical voter group (hereinafter referred to as opposition voters) were calculated based on the detailed dataset for each question. The number of opposition voters in agreement with or against a particular statement was calculated first, and then divided by 317 to see their views as a proportion of the overall opposition sample. For instance, the detailed data showed that overall, 186 out of 289 Fidesz supporters in the sample (64% of them) backed EU membership, while 311 of the now merged "opposition" consisting of 317 people did so (98% of them). This approach will help this publication highlight the extreme divisions within Hungarian society.

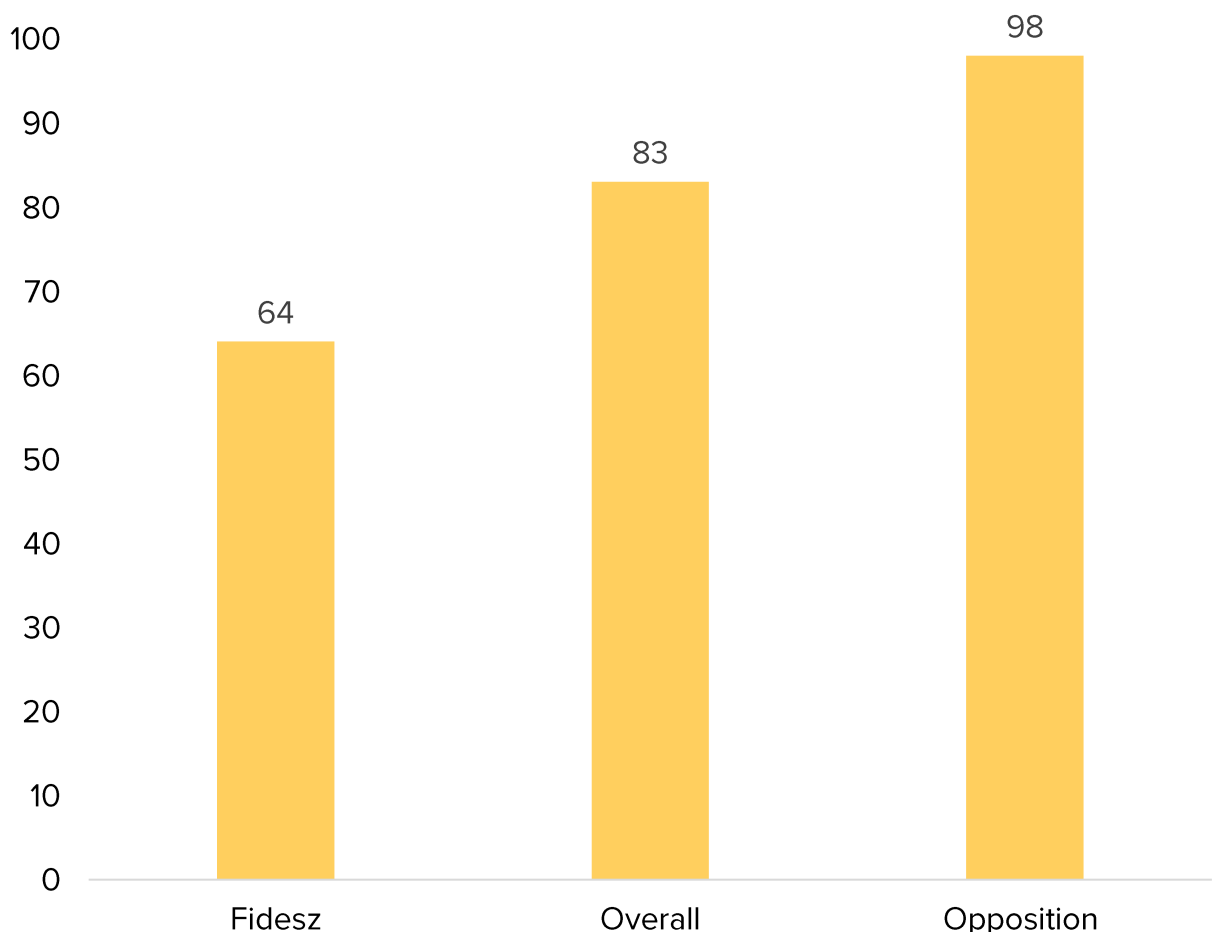




Nobody wants to leave the EU?

In the whole sample, 83% of Hungarian respondents said they would vote for staying in the European Union if there was a referendum on EU membership on the following weekend. And while slightly over two-thirds of Fidesz supporters (64%) would cast their ballot in favour of the European Union, 98% of opposition voters would do so. The results, overall, indicate that Hungarians' commitment to being a part of the European Union is firm, even among the ruling party's voters.

Those who want to 'Stay in the EU'



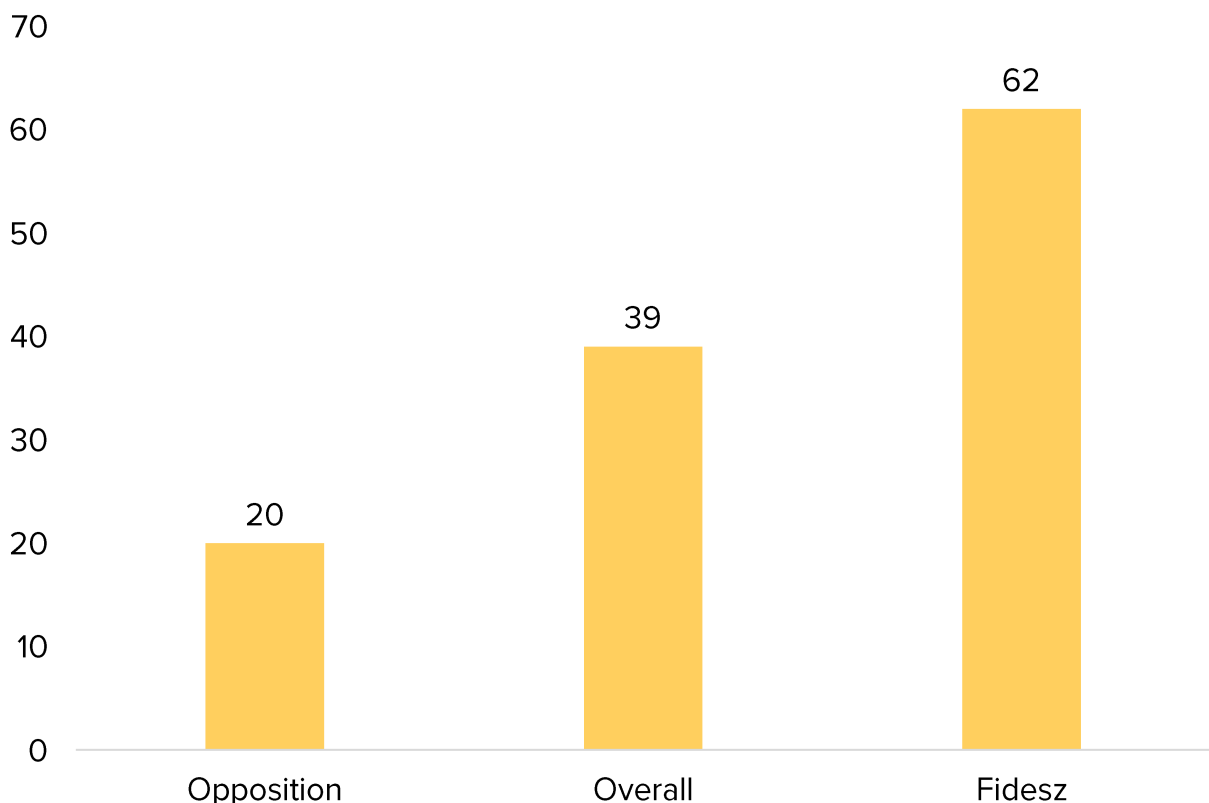


Nobody wants to leave the EU?

The differences proved to be much starker when respondents were asked about narratives concerning the EU. Only 39% of Hungarians agreed that the EU dictates to the country what to do without having the power to influence these decisions. This is by far the lowest proportion among the 8 countries surveyed.

Hungarians are, however, fairly divided based on their party-political beliefs. 62% of Fidesz voters agree with the EU dictate narrative, but only 20% of opposition backers do so. The beliefs of the latter group could have been shaped by multiple factors. First, they are witnessing first-hand that PM Viktor Orbán is vetoing or influencing EU decisions, which is regularly highlighted by government officials.⁷ Interestingly, this is not convincing their own voters. Second, opposition lawmakers have claimed to be successful in influencing EU decisions themselves, for instance regarding the rule of law conditionality mechanism.⁸

Those who agree that 'The European Union dictates to us what to do without Hungary having power to influence it.'



[7] <https://24.hu/belfold/2023/06/27/lezsak-sandor-interju-orosz-ukran-haboru-fidesz-ellenzek/>

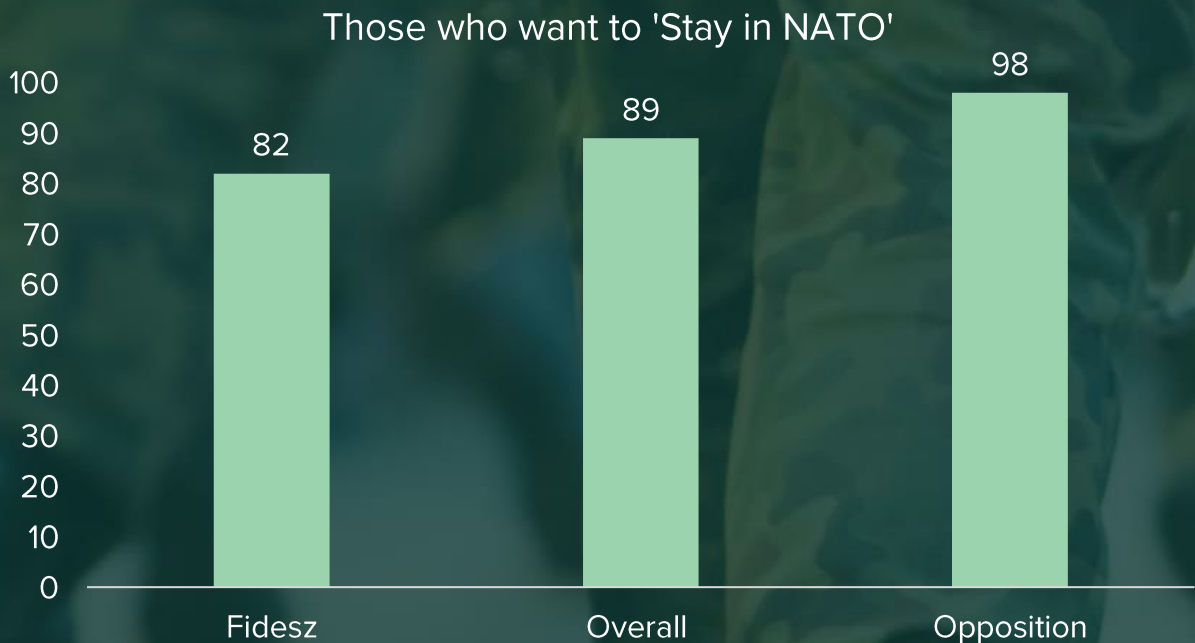
[8]

https://www.facebook.com/feketegyorandras.momentum/posts/661512864525648/?paipv=0&eav=AfbyJn7rJbWpalAiakcPE3TBhAy4kFTsTZIF0-XbwOP4JGrDrqXvZD9-WWO88mT2zfk&_rdi



Few differences on security

Support for NATO membership in Hungary is extremely high at 89%. Hungarians are the second most likely, among the 8 surveyed countries, to say they want to stay a NATO member, tied with Romania. The differences between the views of various political camps are smaller than in the EU's case: 82% of Fidesz supporters and 98% of opposition voters want Hungary to remain a member of the organisation.



Where Hungarian society is divided is the defence of NATO neighbours (e.g., Poland, Baltic states, or Slovakia). Overall, more than two-thirds of Hungarians would agree to the country fulfilling its duties under Article 5, although this is below the 73% average and well below the most committed populations of Poland (92%) and Czechia (91%). The result is concerning in light of the fact that there have only been a few statements from top Hungarian officials questioning NATO's Article 5,⁹ and such statements have only been said sporadically.

[9] See, for instance: https://hvg.hu/itthon/20220304_orban_viktor_kossuth_radio



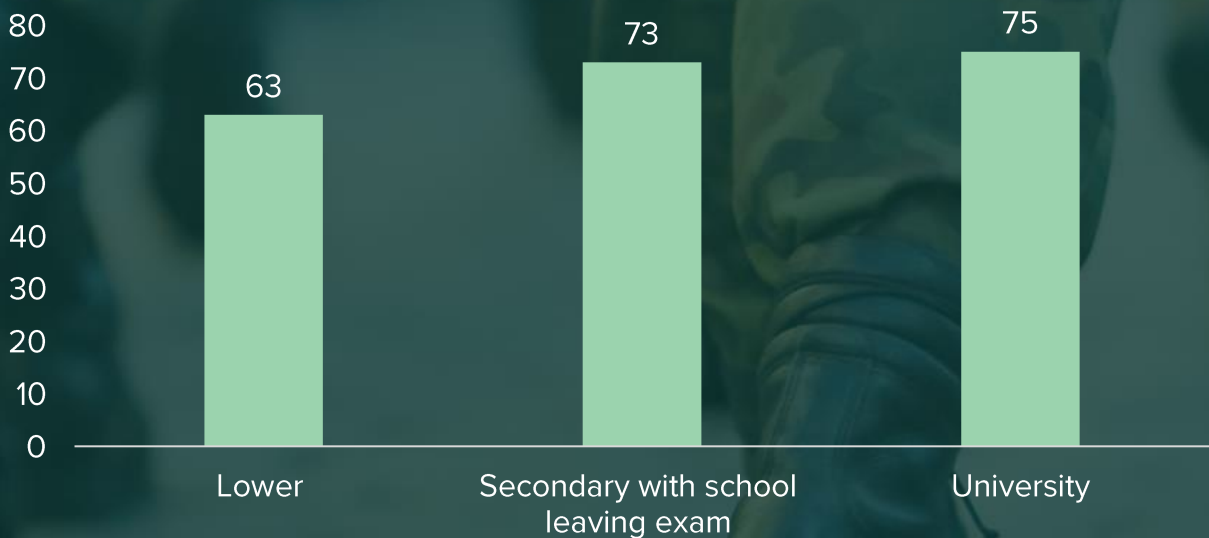
Few differences on security

There are two potential explanations for Hungarian attitudes on this issue. First, the government's peace narratives could be interpreted by a part of the population as an effort to stay out of all wars, including ones that Hungary would have to engage in to fulfil NATO requirements. Second, it could be an expression of a certain aversion to the defence of some neighbouring states that Hungarians have a low opinion of – but since attitudes towards neighbouring countries were not measured in this poll, this assumption is theoretical.

Given that Hungarian society is highly divided on this question – 52% of Fidesz supporters and 88% of opposition supporters agree with this statement, the outcome is probably a result of the ruling party's peace narratives.

On this question, education matters as well: respondents without a school-leaving exam are much less likely to agree to defending NATO neighbours than those with higher levels of education. Thus, communications about Hungary's NATO obligations should be aimed mainly at lower-educated voters in the country.

Those who agree that Hungary should defend its NATO neighbours in case of an attack



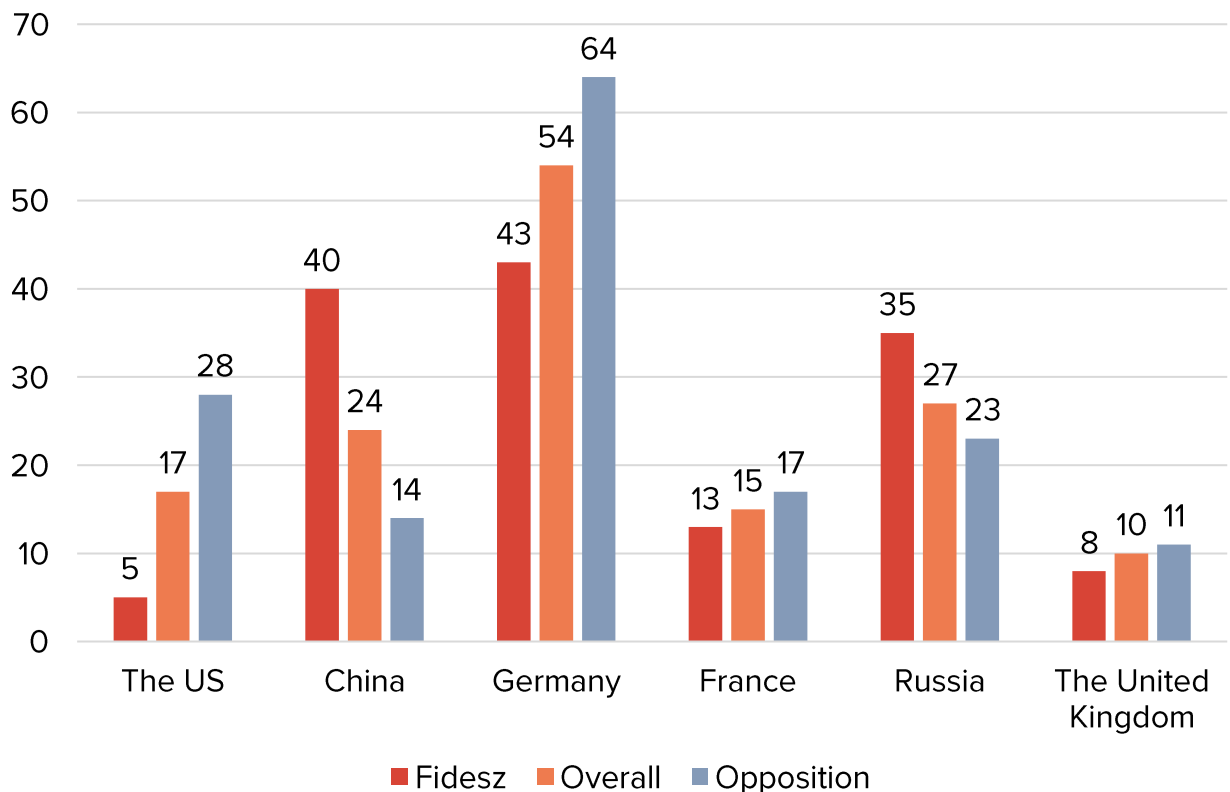


Different views on the main partners

Hungarians differ vastly on which countries Hungary should have a close partnership with based on their political affiliation. The divergence is rather small regarding France, the United Kingdom, and, interestingly, also Russia. 35% of Fidesz supporters and 23% of opposition voters mentioned Moscow as one of Hungary's two most important partners.

The real differences concern the US, Germany, and China. Only 5% of Fidesz voters see the US as a strategic partner for Hungary, but 28% of opposition backers do so, while concerning Germany, the values are 43% and 64%, respectively. Hungary was the only country in the poll where more than a fifth of the population said they considered China a strategic partner. Data reveals that this result is mainly a consequence of Fidesz's ability to convince its own voters about the utility of a relationship with China: 40% of them mentioned Moscow as one of two key strategic partners for the country.

Which of the following global actors do you consider to be most important strategic partners for Hungary? Pick max. 2.

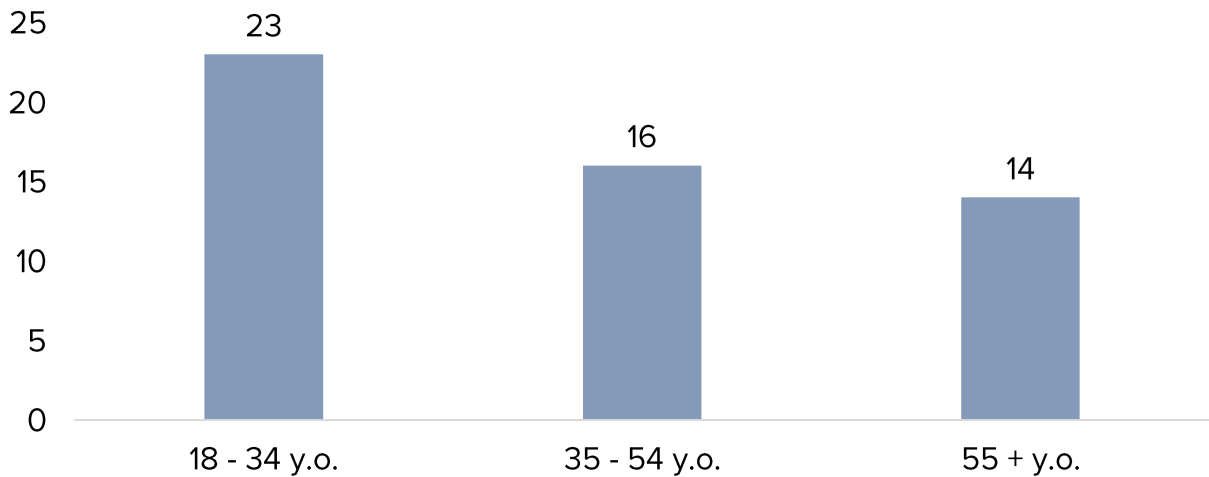




Different views on the main partners

Age is also an important influencing factor in terms of opinion on the United States. Compared to only 14% of Hungarians over the age of 55 who list the US as a key strategic partner for Hungary, 23% of the 18-34 age cohort does so.

Those who picked the US as one of Hungary's top two strategic partners.



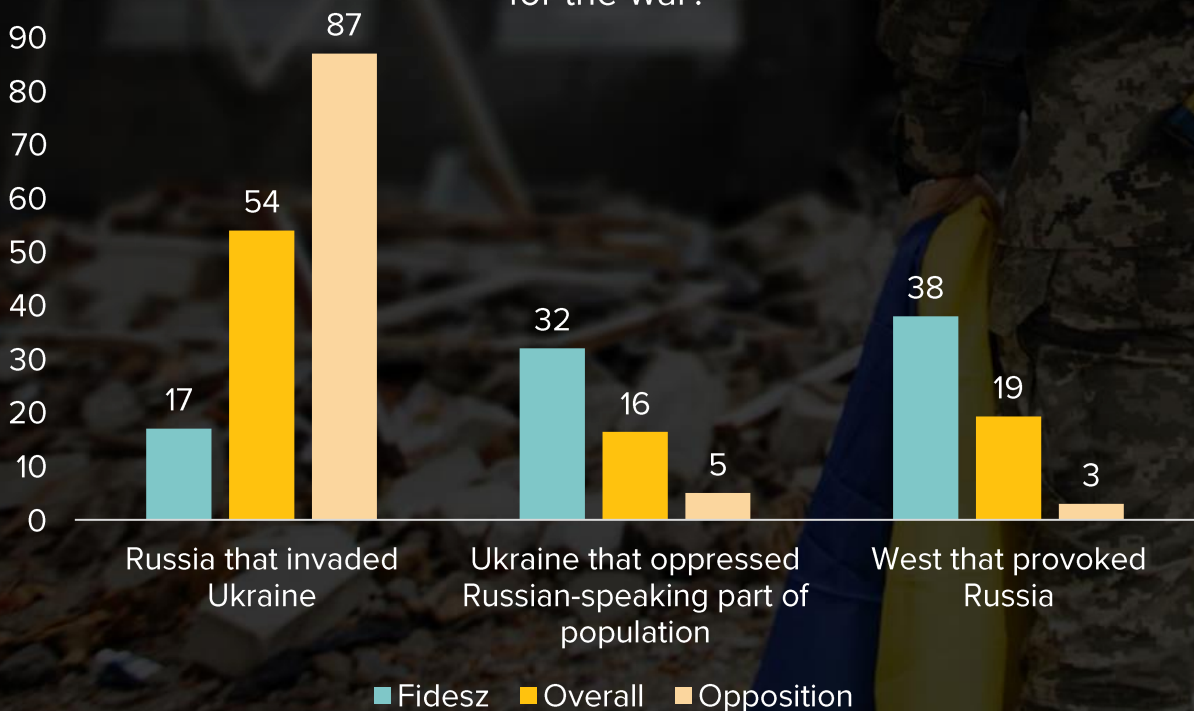


The war: Living in opposite worlds

As noted above, only slightly more than half of Hungarian respondents (54%) pinned the blame for the war on Russia, although this constitutes a 6-percentage-point improvement over 2022. In parallel, the proportion of undecided respondents dropped from 16% to 10% in Hungary, which indicates that those who formulated an opinion over the first year of the war tended to blame Russia for the invasion.

On responsibility for the war, Fidesz and opposition voters are living in completely different worlds. 87% of those who support opposition parties hold Russia responsible for the invasion, 5% blame Ukraine, and 3% see the West as the main culprit. This is almost completely reversed in the case of Fidesz backers: 17% of them identify Russia as responsible, 32% believe it is Ukraine's responsibility, and 38% blame the West. This reveals that Fidesz voters' attitudes are formed to a large extent by the ruling party's and its media outlets' depiction of the war,¹⁰ while the supporters of the opposition follow their own political leaders' views to a large extent. It seems like both camps can only barely penetrate the other's information space on this issue. It must be added that the two camps largely agree on helping refugees from Ukraine.

Whom do Hungarians perceive as primarily responsible for the war?



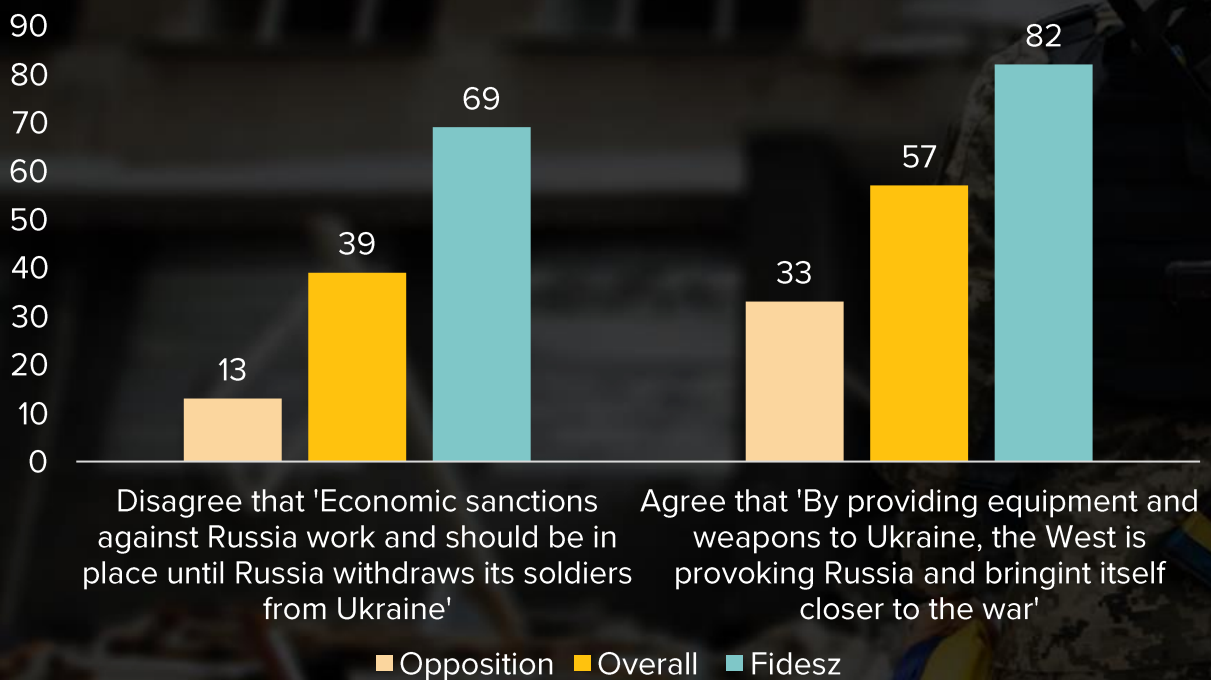
[10] https://politicalcapital.hu/hireink.php?article_read=1&article_id=3186



The war: Living in opposite worlds

The situation is the same when it comes to sanctions. Overall, 39% of Hungarians disagree that sanctions should stay in place until Russia withdraws from Ukraine, which is higher than the average of 31%. The difference between the two political groups is very high. It is clear once more that the sides are following the narratives of their own leaders, with very little chance of diverting from the majority opinions of people's own camps.

Alignment with the ruling party's narratives



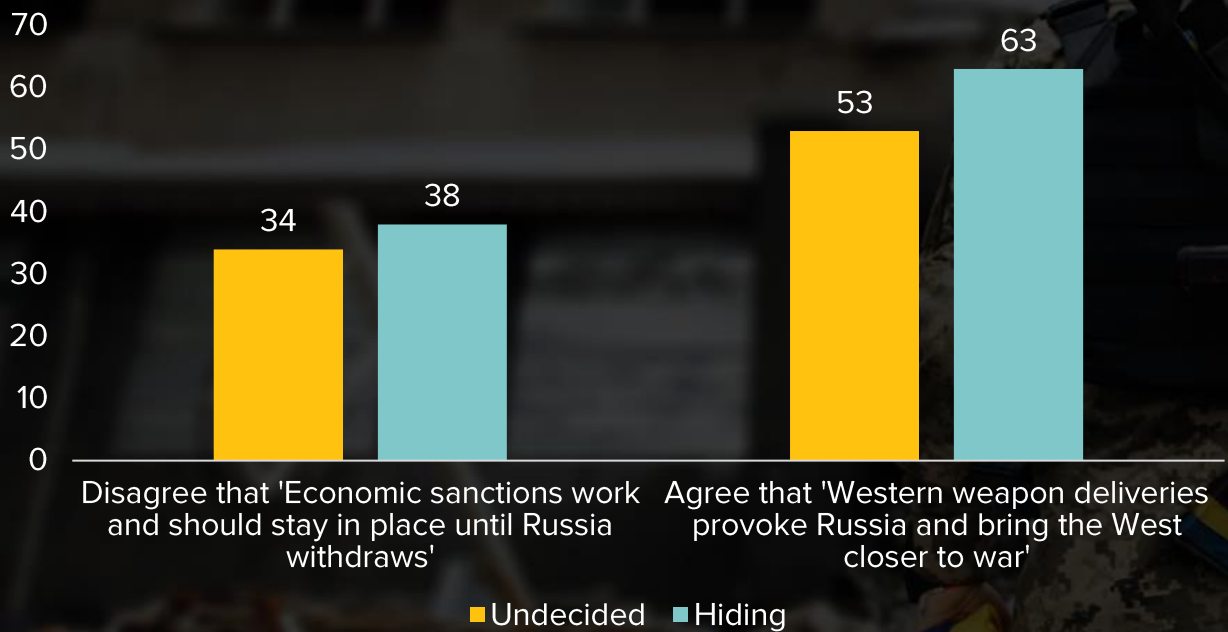
In the case of the two war narratives, what truly shows the effectiveness of the ruling party's narratives against weapon deliveries to Ukraine is how undecided (130 respondents in the sample) and "hiding" voters (who refused to respond to the question on party preferences, 95 in the sample) think. It is worth pointing out how many undecided or hiding voters agree with the ruling party's narratives; i.e., they disagree that sanctions work and should be in place and agree that weapon deliveries are provoking Russia.



The war: Living in opposite worlds

Data shows that while only 34% of undecided voters and 38% of those who refused to reveal their party preferences supported the government's views on sanctions, 53% and 63% of them, respectively, aligned with Fidesz's narrative on weapon deliveries to Ukraine. Thus, pro-sanction statements seem to have been more convincing among these electoral strata, while the ruling party succeeded among them on the issue of weapons.

Undecided/hiding voters who align with the ruling party's narratives



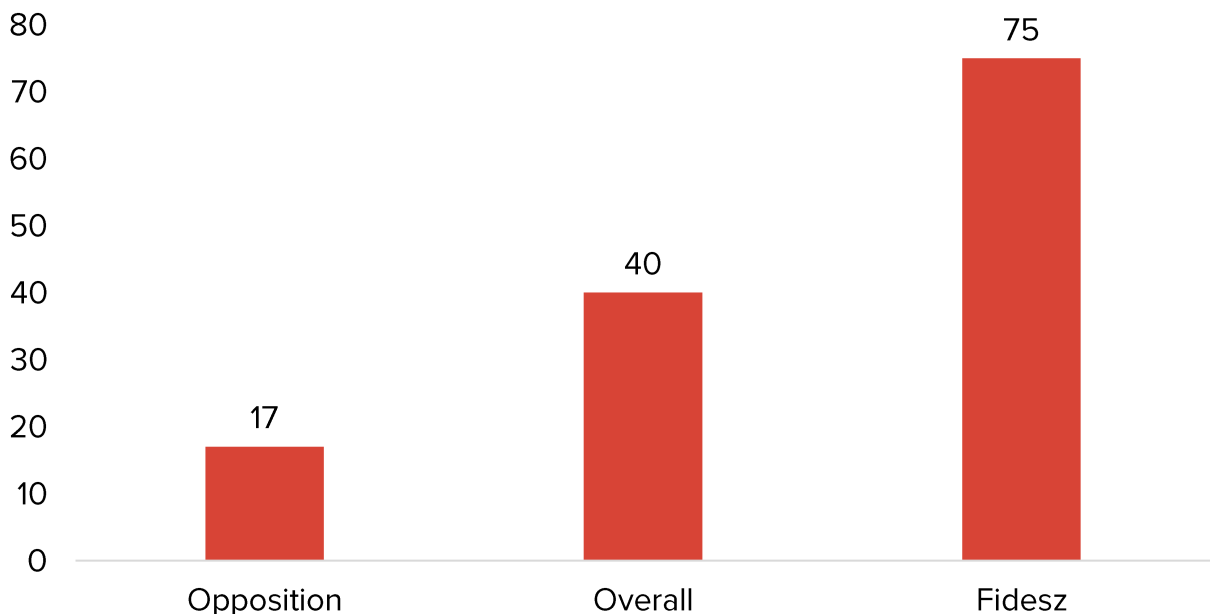


Pro-government vs anti-government disinformation

As noted above, Hungarians see the world based on their party-political beliefs. The Hungarian respondents were also asked about two disinformation narratives specific to Hungary; one that is frequently repeated by the ruling party and one that is prevalent on opposition sites.

Respondents were asked whether they believe that the Hungarian opposition is being paid to represent foreign interests in its political agenda. This is a claim the ruling party has repeated often since at least 2015^[1] and that remains prevalent to this day.^[12] According to GLOBSEC polling, 40% of Hungarians agreed with this statement about a year after the general election of 2022. Taking a look at respondents' views based on political affiliation, it is clear that the ruling party's message was heard by Fidesz voters loudly and clearly, while only 17% of the opposition backers believe that their chosen parties are "foreign agents."

Those who agree that 'the Hungarian opposition is paid to represent foreign interests in its political agenda'



[11] <https://444.hu/2018/03/15/orban-viktor-a-bekemenet-kiallas-lengyelorszag-mellett-is>

[12] <https://telex.hu/belfold/2023/06/26/titkosszolgalmi-jelentes-marki-zay-peter-mmm-kampanyfinansziroz-as-action-for-democracy>

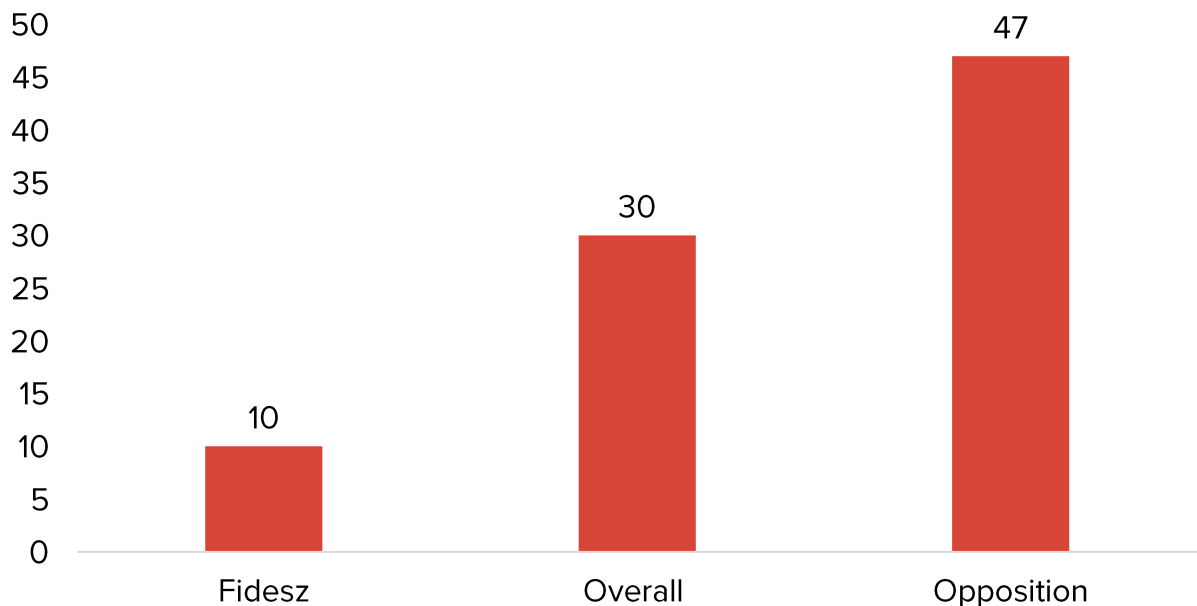


Pro-government vs anti-government disinformation

Secondly, respondents were asked if they agreed that PM Viktor Orbán had been receiving psychiatric treatment in a private hospital in Graz – a narrative that regularly occurs on opposition-leaning Hungarian-language portals.¹³ Overall support for the narrative was 10 percentage points lower than the approval rating of the pro-Fidesz narrative, which indicates that – naturally – the ruling party is better able to reach the Hungarian audience.

47% of opposition voters agreed with this statement, while only 10% of Fidesz supporters did so. The result, compared to the previous narrative, shows opposition-leaning portals do not even reach a wide layer of their own potential audience.

Those who agree that ‘PM Viktor Orbán has been receiving psychiatric treatment in a private hospital in Graz’



[13] <https://canadahun.com/temak/itt-a-sz%C3%A1mla-arr%C3%B3l-hogy-orb%C3%A1nt-a-legnagyobb-ideggy%C3%B3gy%C3%A1szati-klinik%C3%A1n-kezelt%C3%A9k-grazban.59965/>

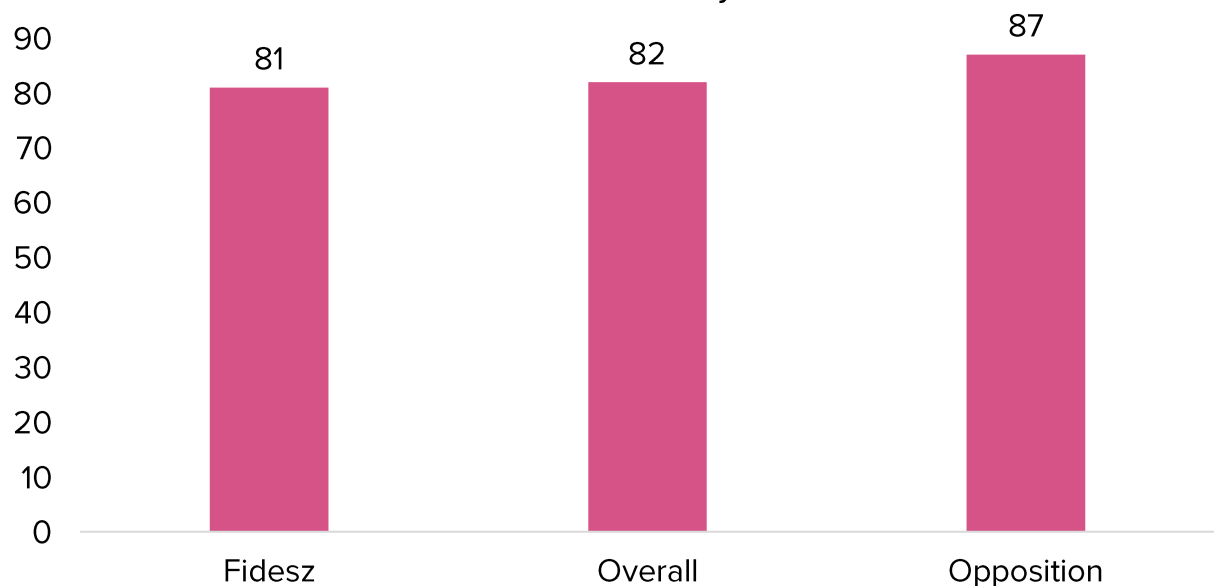


What is democracy?

In the CEE region, 80% of respondents agreed that democracy as a system based on equality, human rights, freedoms, and the rule of law is good for their respective countries. Agreement with this system, however, fell to only 61% when they were asked about liberal democracy – even though the definition was not changed at all. This indicates that constant smear campaigns against the terms ‘liberal’ and ‘liberalism’ by populist and pro-Kremlin forces have been highly effective. In Hungary, the difference is even starker, as 82% of respondents agreed with the first statement, but only 61% did with the second.

When it comes to agreement on the definition of ‘democracy,’ Hungarians of all political colours support the definition proposed to them. This indicates that the core values of the West that make up democracy are not broadly refused in Hungarian society.

Those who agree that ‘democracy as a system based on equality, human rights, freedoms and the rule of law is good for the country’



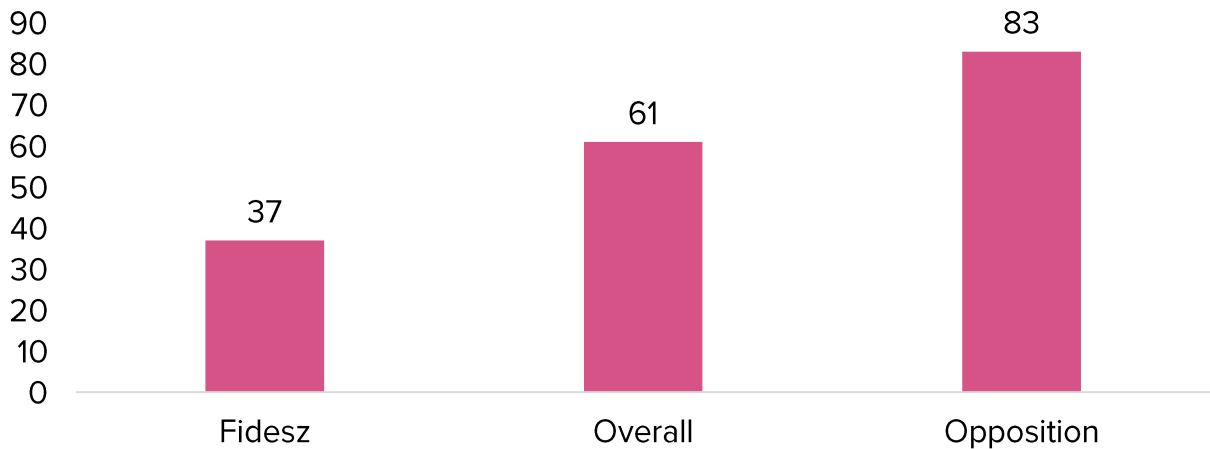
However, once the same question is asked about liberal democracy, society splits. While 83% of opposition voters then agree with the same definition, only 37% of Fidesz voters do so. The strongly anti-liberal democracy statements¹⁴ of the ruling party and the Hungarian prime minister himself have clearly affected the views of the voters of the ruling party – as it has been the case on other topics as well. It is descriptive of the effect of such narratives that a single word can create large societal gaps on an issue that otherwise enjoys the support of the vast majority of the population.

[14] <https://magyarnemzet.hu/kulfold/2021/05/orban-viktor-ma-nem-letezik-liberalis-demokracia>



What is democracy?

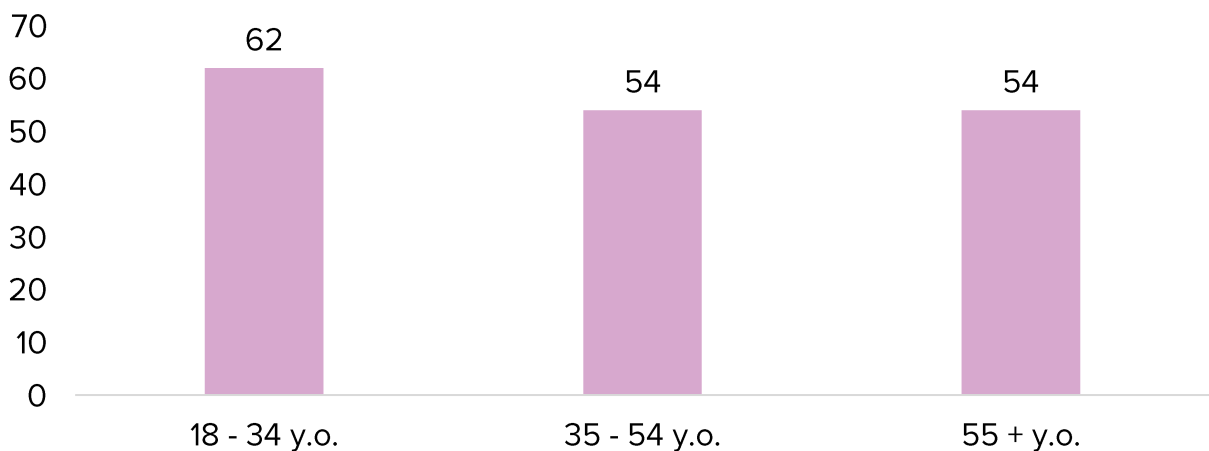
Those who agree that 'liberal democracy as a system based on equality, human rights, freedoms and the rule of law is good for the country'



Despite years-long government campaigns against LGBTI+ people, 52% of Hungarians disagree that LGBTI+ (equal opportunities and rights for gays and transsexuals) is an immoral and decadent ideology, which is the third-highest in the 8 countries. In terms of agreement with LGBTI+ people's rights, 56% of Hungarian respondents agreed they should be guaranteed, which is the second-highest value among the 8 countries.

In terms of supporting LGBTI+ people's rights, there is certainly a division based on political views. However, age also becomes a factor in this question. 62% of 18-34-year-olds back rights for the LGBTI community, but only 54% of the older Hungarian age cohorts (35-54 and 55+) do so.

Those who agree that 'The rights of LGBTI community (such as a right to marriage) should be guaranteed', by age



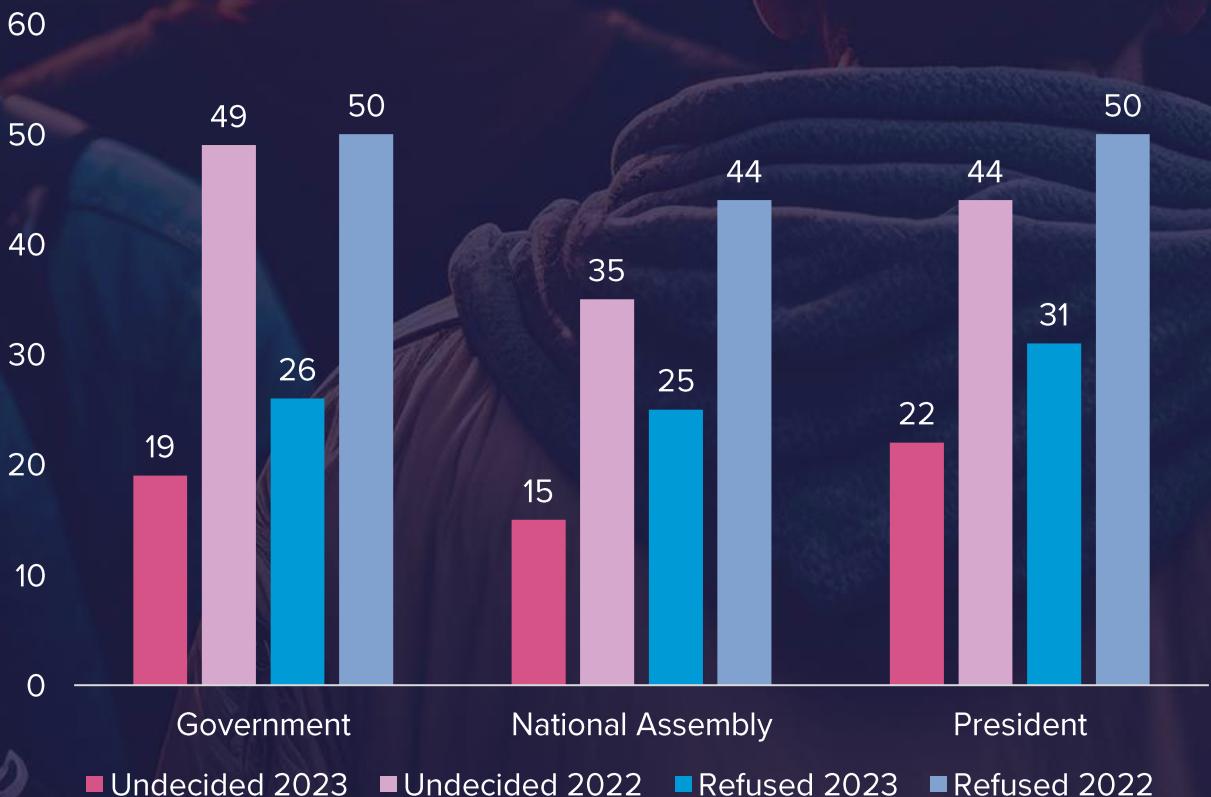


Missing trust

Trust in Hungarian society has fallen substantially between March 2022 and March 2023. Over this period, trust in the government fell from 55% to 39%, while trust in the National Assembly fell from 50% to 34%. Trust in the president is generally among the highest among public institutions, but not in Hungary, as only 39% of respondents said they trusted the president, and this is also a decrease compared to the 56% measured last year. It is perhaps unsurprising that in general, almost all Fidesz supporters trust the government, the National Assembly, and the president, while opposition backers do not do so.

Compared to 2022, the main change that could explain the fall in trust is that in 2023, undecided voters and those who refused to reveal their political preferences were much less likely to say they trust the government. Moreover, the proportion of undecided voters in the sample is more than double than it was in 2022. This suggests that there is a considerable layer of Hungarians who are dissatisfied with the government's measures to handle the economic challenges Hungary has faced since the election, but are yet to pick a political party.

Trust in public institutions in Hungary among undecided voters and those who refused to reveal their party preference.





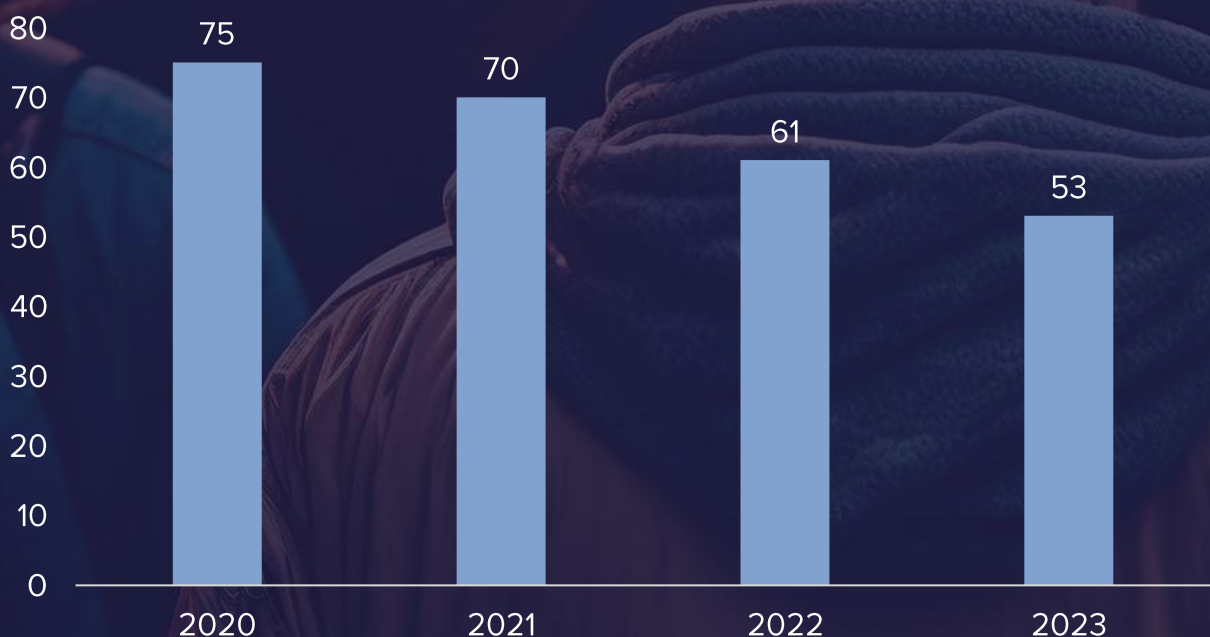
Missing trust

Trust in the armed forces has fallen substantially in Hungary over the past three years. In 2020, 75% of Hungarians said they trusted the army, while this fell to only 53% in 2023.

This fall can also partially be attributed to a decline in support among undecided voters and those who refuse to reveal party preferences, but a clear trend is also visible in trust among opposition voters. In 2020, 63% of opposition voters in the sample said they trusted the armed forces, while this fell to 35% in 2023. This indicates that the government's decisions related to the army created aversion among opposition voters. One such decision is a January 2023 decree that allowed the Minister of Defence to terminate the contracts of military officials without any justification if they are over 45 years of age and have at least 25 years of service. Since this is a fairly recent event, it alone cannot explain this fall in trust. Another factor could be the criticisms voiced about the cabinet's Zrínyi 2026 military development program, especially regarding the lack of transparency during large-scale equipment procurements.¹⁵

The aforementioned decree and criticism from one of the recently fired officials will certainly not serve to strengthen trust in the armed forces, especially his claims about the list of names to be terminated being put together by a pro-Fidesz think tank¹⁶ – although this does not mean under any circumstances that there should not be a place for the criticism of military affairs.

Trust in the armed forces



[15] <https://www.atv.hu/belfold/20220702/volt-honvedelmi-miniszter-a-katonak-alapjovedelmevel-kellene-kezdeni-a-honvedelem-fejleszteset>

[16] <https://24.hu/belfold/2023/06/28/honvedseg-kirugasok-miniszter-varga-csaba-istvan-partizan/>



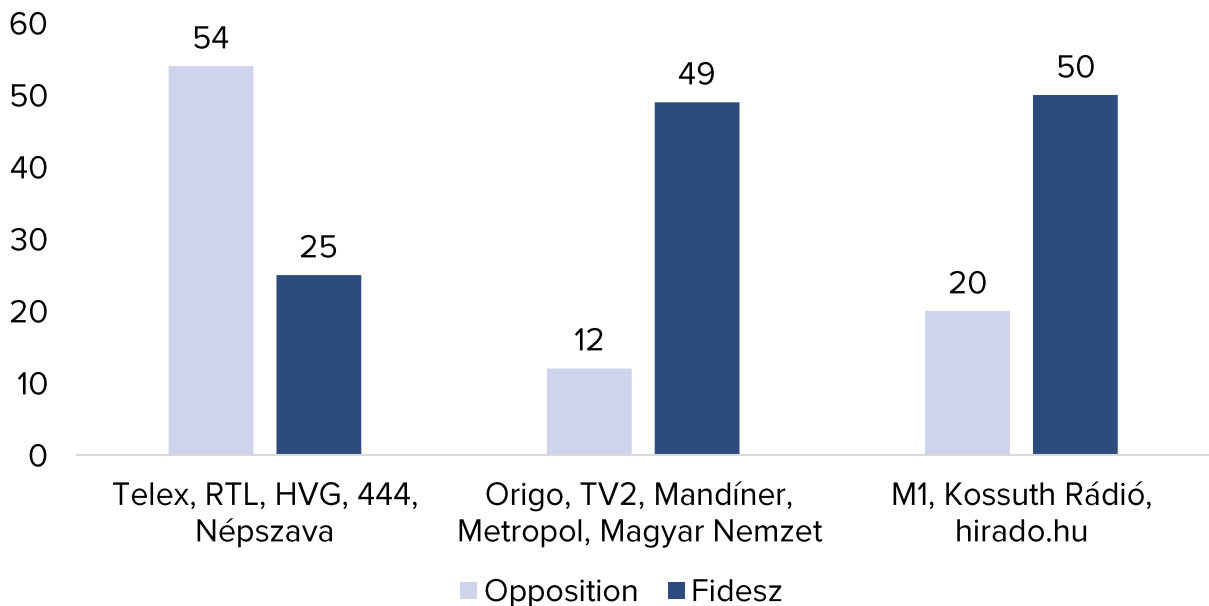
Media consumption decided by political orientation

Data on media consumption highlights that the Hungarian population tends to consume media based on political preferences.

Over half of opposition voters say they regularly watch/read Telex, RTL, HVG, 444, and Népszava (hereinafter labelled ‘group 1’), which means they are more than twice as likely to do so than Fidesz backers. These outlets are often in the crosshairs of the ruling party, who claim they are "leftist-liberal" media.¹⁷

In contrast, Fidesz voters are much more likely to regularly watch/read Origo, TV2, Mandíner, Metropol, Magyar Nemzet (hereinafter labelled ‘group 2’) or the public broadcaster's channels (hereinafter labelled ‘group 3’), which are frequently criticised for their pro-government news coverage.¹⁸

Those who regularly watch/read the following media outlets.



[17] <https://telex.hu/komplex/2021/07/23/orban-30-eves-haboruja-a-mediaval>

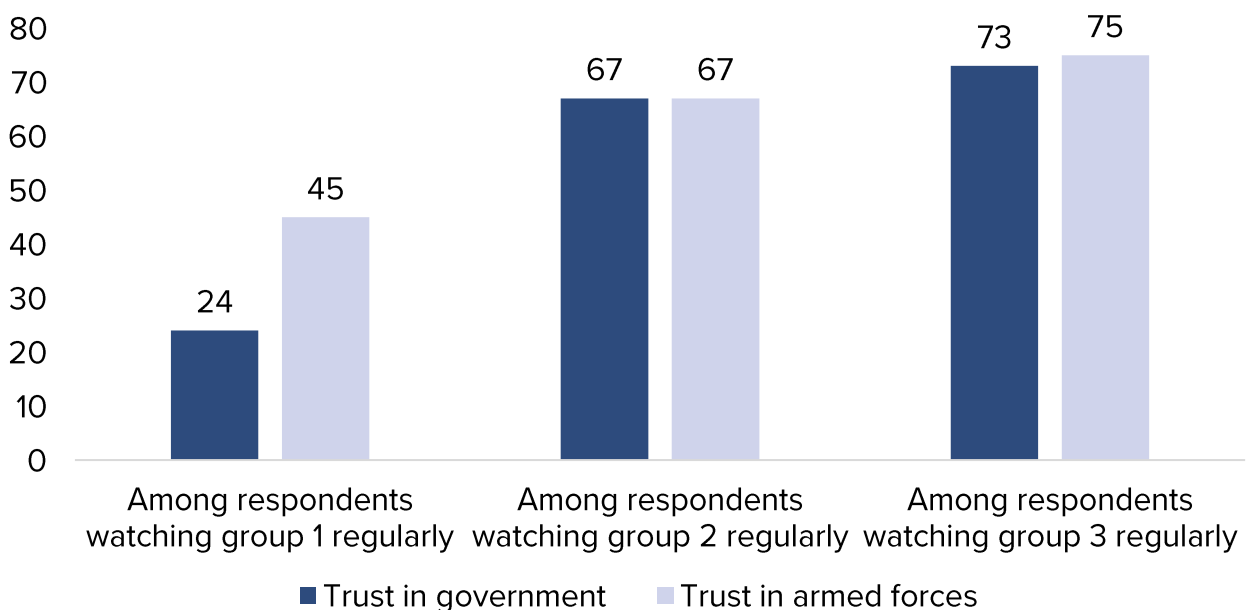
[18] <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/14/hungarys-government-in-reality-controls-more-than-half-of-leading-media/>



Media consumption decided by political orientation

Media consumption also affects trust. Those who regularly watch group 2 and group 3 media have expressed strong trust in both the government (67% and 73%, respectively) and the armed forces (67% and 75%, respectively). In contrast, only about a quarter of the regular followers of group 1 media expressed confidence in the Hungarian cabinet, and less than half of them trust the armed forces. The tendency of group 2 and group 3 outlets to underreport national political-economic issues and scandals and constantly praise the actions of national authorities likely contributes significantly to generating trust within a specific layer of society.

Trust in government and armed forces, by media consumption



The results indicate that besides the fact that Hungarians gravitate towards the media outlets they believe align with their worldview, regularly repeated content in massive volumes in these outlets can further reinforce their potentially pre-existing views. Thus, the political takeover of a large volume of media outlets¹⁹ has a very clear effect on public attitudes in the long-term.

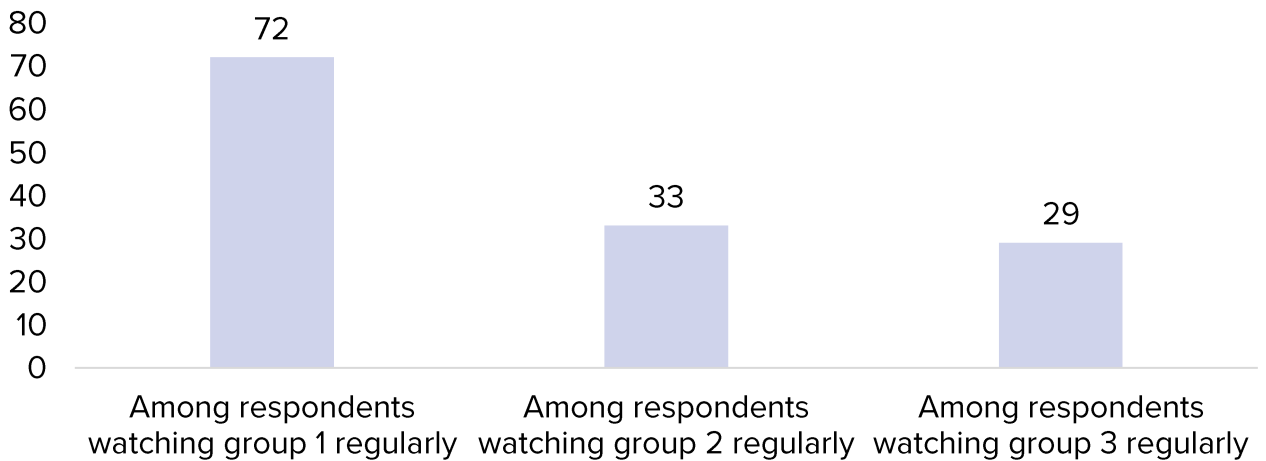
[19] https://hvg.hu/itthon/20181128_fidesz_media_kozpontositás_lisztkay



Media consumption decided by political orientation

Media consumption can, in turn, affect how Hungarian respondents view the world. For example, 72% of people who watch group 1 outlets regularly pin the blame for the war primarily on Russia, but only 33% of group 2 and 29% of group 3 followers do so.

Those consider Russia to be primarily responsible for the war, by media consumption





A NEED TO FIND MIDDLE GROUND

It is clear from Hungarian results that the attitudes of the Hungarian population are strongly affected by their party-political affiliation, and this has been aggravated by the political climate that has developed in the past decades in the country. It has frequently been noted by various Hungarian political actors that the public discourse has become increasingly aggressive in the country.²⁰ Naturally, the ruling party is blaming the opposition for it,²¹ while the opposition is blaming the ruling party.²²

Additionally, the ruling party and the opposition are describing the world from entirely different perspectives. Some voices are going as far as claiming that the representatives of the other camp are not part of the nation, but merely "country-dwellers."²³

Consequently, no attempts are being made at finding any sort of national consensus, which drives the attitudes of various societal groups apart – although some agreement still exists on EU and NATO membership, among others. This level of fragmentation constitutes a significant weakness in the face of foreign malign influencing attempts. The wedges that exist within society can be exploited by malign foreign forces, particularly Russia or China, when the necessity arises – although currently, they are both receiving favourable treatment at the hands of the Hungarian government and ruling party.

It needs to be noted that this weakness is being created by the ruling party and – to some extent – the opposition; it is entirely driven by domestic political factors. Fidesz has long focused on depicting itself as the sole representative of the nation and national interests;²⁴ the only force whose policies can benefit Hungary. Parallely, some opposition forces (e.g., Democratic Coalition chairman Ferenc Gyurcsány) declared that the only question can be whether someone is with or against PM Orbán, and there is no space for a middle ground.²⁵ These factors, by default, rule out any negotiations between opposing political sides on the country's future. Consequently, it is unlikely that there will be steps taken in the short-term to help Hungarian society become more united, but thoughts will need to be given to achieving it in the long-term.

In addition to party politics, age, education, and media consumption have some effects on respondents' answers. Younger Hungarian voters are generally more open towards the West and western values, as well as those with higher levels of education. In contrast, while an urban-rural divide is often discussed in Hungary, this is less visible in public attitudes.

[20] See an article from 2007: <https://magyarnemzet.hu/archivum-magyarnemzet/2007/11/stilus-es-kozbeszed> and from 2019: <https://hirtv.hu/ahirtvhirei/az-eldurvult-kozbeszed-miatt-kozlemany-tadtak-ki-a-keresztény-ertelmiségiek-2475001>

[21] https://index.hu/belfold/2020/02/06/kover_szerint_az_ellenzek_olyan_mint_a_lenin-fiuk/

[22] <https://www.zaol.hu/helyi-kozelet/2023/05/majalis-tartott-a-demokratikus-koalicio-szombaton-a-zalaegerszegi-disz-teren>

[23] <https://24.hu/belfold/2023/06/27/lezsak-sandor-interju-orosz-ukran-haboru-fidesz-ellenzek/>

[24] <https://index.hu/belfold/var0507/>

[25] <https://www.facebook.com/gyurcsanyf/posts/671987747617401/>



A NEED TO FIND MIDDLE GROUND

Media consumption habits are even more influential on public attitudes: those who regularly watch media outlets that are broadly considered independent are, on average, substantially more pro-West than those who mainly watch or read media outlets under political control. While it is true that the formulation of media consumption habits largely depends on the pre-existing political views of respondents, the potentially misleading contents published by some outlets in large volumes certainly help conserve societal attitudes.



CREDITS

A detailed methodology for GLOBSEC Trends 2023 is available in the project's comparative study, available on GLOBSEC's website. The study can be found on this link:

<https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/publications/globsec-trends-2023-united-we-still-stand>

The polling in Hungary was done by Publicus Kutató és Tanácsadó Intézet Kft. The sample size was 1000 and the pollster used computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). The poll, carried out in March 2023, was – as in all countries – representative of Hungary in terms of gender, age, place of residence and size of settlement.

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