

# There is still more to learn

*Opinions about the Hungarian education*

ANALYSIS BY THE REPUBLIKON INSTITUTE



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## SUMMARY

- Education has been one of the most decisive topics of public life recently, therefore in the newest research of the Republikon Institute, we examined what the Hungarian society thinks about the educational system.
- The Hungarian education system got overwhelmingly negative ratings. 62%, almost 2/3 of the total population viewed it negatively, and only 9% of respondents gave a positive rating, which means that the Hungarian society's view about the educational system is largely negative.
- The voters of Fidesz-KDNP aren't satisfied with the Hungarian education system either; 43% of them had a negative opinion of it, and only 21% of them rated it positively.
- More than three quarters of opposition voters had a negative opinion of the educational system.
- The more time someone spends in education, the worse their opinion of it is. While „only” 55% of respondents with elementary education thinks negatively, this rate among graduates is 68%, more than 2/3.
- The bigger settlement the respondent lives in, the worse their opinion of education is. 64%, almost 2/3 of residents from the capital gave a negative rating, while 57% of the citizens in municipalities had a negative opinion about the Hungarian education.
- It slightly influences one's opinion of education if the respondent has a school-age child; however, it's interesting that these parents have a somewhat more positive view of the education system compared to those who don't have school-aged children.
- Overall, there are obvious trends: younger respondents, who live in bigger cities and have higher education, tend to be more critical towards the education system than the already general negative view. However, it is important to mention, that these are the exact groups in which the opposition voters are overrepresented, so not just demographic, but also political fault lines can influence the opinions of the education.

## INTRODUCTION

Education has been one of the most decisive topics of the Hungarian public life since the change of regime in 1989. Sadly, mostly in a negative way. It is especially true for the last two years, because of the longest wave of education protests, which included numerous teachers' strikes. The reason behind these demonstrations isn't just the low wages of teachers, but also the critical state of the education system as a whole, which affects not just the teachers, but all of Hungary – students, parents, the economy and the entire society – and almost everyone has their own opinion of it. In the latest research<sup>1</sup> of Republikon, we surveyed how the Hungarian society views the state of the education system, including different demographic groups and voter bases of parties.

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<sup>1</sup> Methodology: The research was conducted through telephone interviews with 1000 participants between August 16 and 23 2023; it is representative of the adult population in terms of gender, age, level of education and place of residence. Margin of error: +/- 3,2%.

## RESULTS

Just as Hungarian students receive grades, in this research, the respondents had to use the same metric to evaluate the performance of the Hungarian education system. We used a scale ranging from one to five, one being the worst, while five being the best. The ratings are sorted by demographic groups: gender, age, level of education, place of residence, party preference and whether the respondent has a school-age child or not.

Examining the results, we can say that the Hungarian education system got devastating ratings. 62%, almost 2/3 of the population, gave a negative grade. While only a total of 9% had a positive view. This means that the Hungarian society's opinion about the education system is overwhelmingly negative.

First, we looked at the difference between the voters of parties. One of the most important conclusions is that the voters of Fidesz – KDNP aren't satisfied with the Hungarian education system neither. Among these voters, twice as much of them gave negative ratings, then positive ones; 43% of them gave a negative rating, while only 21% had a positive opinion of it. Of course, the opposition voters rated the education system significantly more negatively than the supporters of the current government. More than three quarters of the opposition voters gave a negative rating to the education system. Voters of Momentum, DK and MKKP were the most critical, because in their case, only 1 or 2% of respondents gave a positive mark. Interestingly, the voters of right-wing opposition are more satisfied with the education system, than the left-wing – liberal voters. 58% of Mi Hazánk's voters had a negative view, while only 45% of voters of Jobbik gave a negative mark. This may have multiple reasons behind it. The most evident is that the right-wing voters usually live in smaller towns, their level of education is lower and – as we will see later – among these groups, the general negative view of the Hungarian education system is lower. Another explanation could be that the current self-proclaimed right-wing government's education policy including the national curriculum, compulsory readings and attitude towards education is much closer to the view of the right-wing opposition voters, than to the left-wing and liberal ones. Overall, the right-wing still has a critical view towards the Hungarian education system.

Examining the view of different age groups, only small differences are visible. However, it can be noticed, that young adults are the most critical towards the education system. The rate of positive opinion is the lowest (7%) among 18-40 olds.

As might be expected, this age group has the most connection with the education system. Most of them are still students, or their memories of the system are still

fresh. Maybe they have young children, through whom they have to face the state of the Hungarian education system.

The education background of the respondents is particularly relevant when examining opinions of education. Regarding of this, we can see an obvious trend: the more time someone spends in education, the worse their opinion of it. We can rephrase this as the higher education level someone has, the more negative their view about Hungarian education system will be. „Only” 55% of respondents with only elementary level education has a negative view, this rate among respondents with university degree is more than 2/3, 68%. 13% of the lowest level educated group is satisfied with the education, while only 4% of the highest level group has a positive view of it.

Sorting via place of residence is also impressive. The larger the city in which the respondent lives, the worse their opinion of education is. Almost 2/3 of Budapest’s residents, 64% of them gave a negative rating, while 57% of residents in villages had a negative view of the Hungarian education. The fault line between the capital and the countryside is strongly present in Hungarian politics. This is simplest reason behind that the general opinion of the Hungarian education is more negative in opposition-oriented cities, than in smaller ones, where the governing party is stronger, despite the fact, that the inadequacies of the education system is more present in smaller towns.

We also examined that if having a school-age child have any influence on the ratings of responders. This only affects the ratings minimally, however, it is interesting that these parents have a slightly more positive opinion of the education system, than those without school age children. The reason behind this could be that the „outsiders” only hear about the education system if a new problem occurs, while respondents with a school-age child may notice the positive experience of their kid, get in touch with dedicated teachers and participate in school related events. Overall, these might improve the personal experiences of parents, regardless all of the negative elements of the education system. Despite all of this, 60% of parents with school-age children still has a negative opinion of the Hungarian education system.

## General view of education system by demographics

-90% -70% -50% -30% -10% 10% 30%

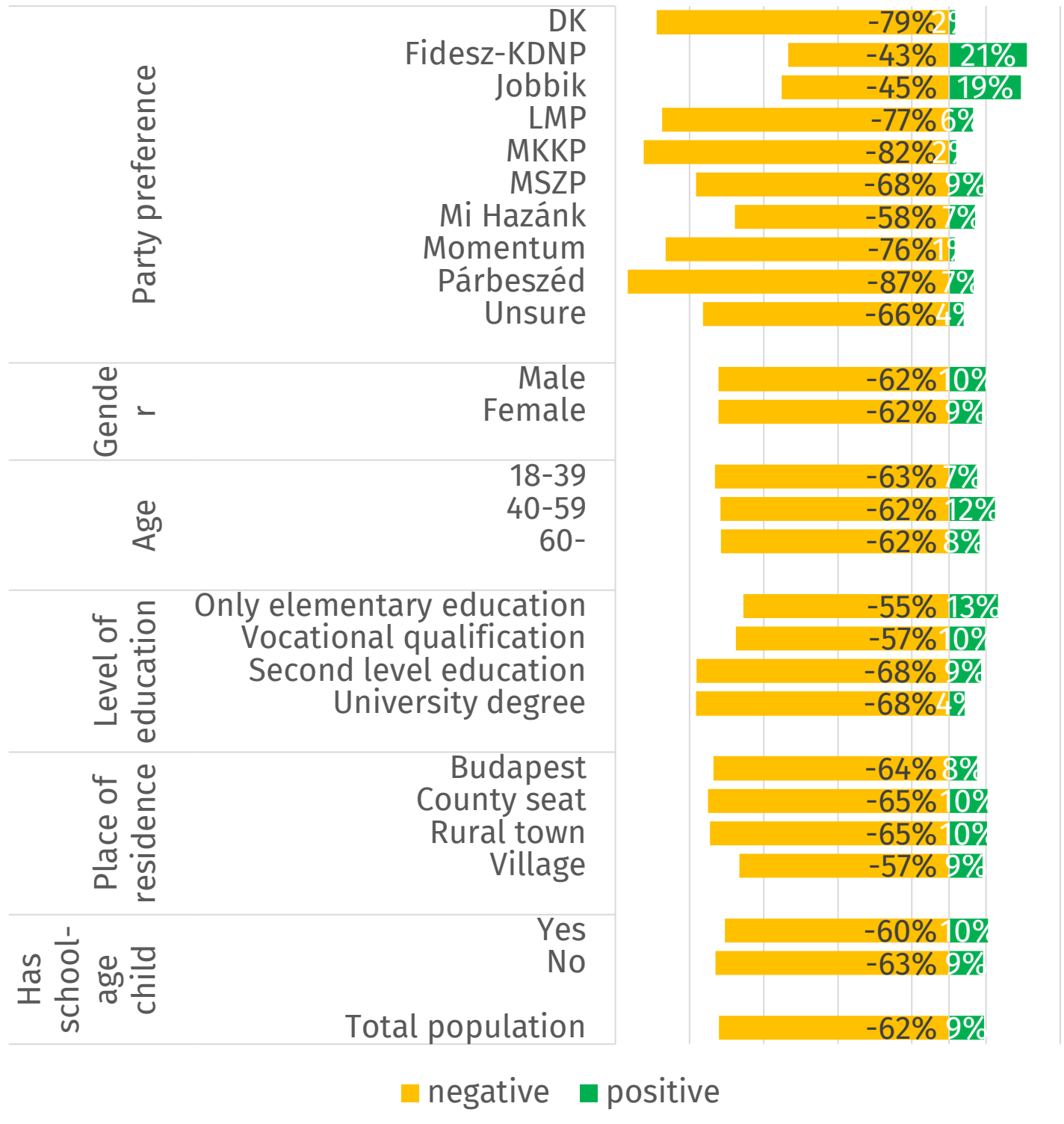


Figure 1: General view of education system by demographics