Popularity indicators of Hungarian politicians
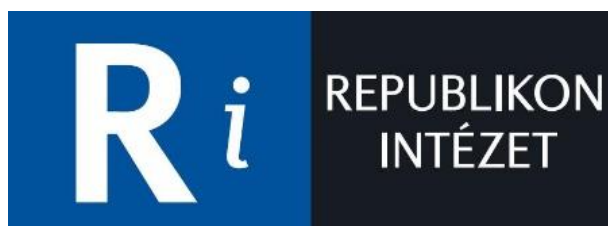
Half a year before the elections

R i REPUBLIKON INTÉZET

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SUMMARY

- In its latest survey, Republikon Institute asked respondents what they thought of Péter Magyar, Viktor Orbán, and other party leaders and important politicians. Péter Magyar is visibly more popular than Viktor Orbán. Two-thirds of voters reject the prime minister, who governs with a two-thirds majority. While 23% of respondents expressed support for the Prime Minister, similar to the 24% backing for the ruling Fidesz-KDNP party, support for Péter Magyar was significantly higher at 50%. This means that half of the total population supports him, a stark contrast to the 30% support for his party, TISZA. Furthermore, Magyar's popularity is more than double that of Viktor Orbán.

- 80% of those who are undecided in terms of party preference dislike Viktor Orbán, whereas only 6% indicated support for him. This represents a reserve equal to 2% of the total population. Among the same group of undecided voters, Péter Magyar is supported by 59%, and only 22% reject him.

- Besides Magyar and Orbán, we also measured how voters align with other popular politicians.

- Judit Varga and János Lázár are liked by 12% of voters, which corresponds to only half of the Fidesz-KDNP sympathizers. János Lázár is less popular, with nearly three-quarters of respondents disliking him. Judit Varga is rejected by 69%.

- Klára Dobrev and László Toroczkai are both more popular than their respective parties, but overall are considered unpopular among the population as a whole. Gergely Kovács is much more popular than the Kutyapárt party. He also has more supporters among the general population, but many people don't know his name as well as they know the names of others.

- Gergely Karácsony and Ákos Hadházy were the most popular among the politicians being surveyed. Karácsony is supported by 55%, while Hadházy was shown 58% support

INTRODUCTION

We often refer to our monthly party preference survey as a "popularity contest", but in the 2026 election race, voter preferences are more indicative of the individual

political personas of politicians, rather than political parties. Voters primarily follow the media duel between Péter Magyar and Viktor Orbán, who are the leaders of the two currently most popular political parties, both of which have built their campaigns around their leaders. On one side, voters can observe Péter Magyar's "one-man show." In contrast, there is Viktor Orbán, who has now presented himself as a prime minister, campaign leader, minister of foreign affairs, and a street fighter all in one. For this reason, it is justified to measure the popularity of leading politicians, serving as key information in the upcoming months leading up to the elections. In our last survey[1] we asked respondents what they think about the two "main characters", as well as other prominent politicians.

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[1] The survey was conducted between October 16 and 22, 2025, with 1,000 people interviewed by telephone. The survey is not representative of the adult population of the country in terms of age, educational attainment, and type of settlement. The margin of error is +/- 3.5%.

Péter Magyar contra Viktor Orbán

Based on our current information, one of the two party leaders is the highest contender for the prime minister's seat in the 2026 election, meaning the outcome will likely depend on their competition. However, it is important to note that a politician's popularity does not necessarily translate into votes, as voter motivation regarding actual participation in elections is a more complex issue. Considering the contest of personalities, it is crucial to identify who is leading. According to the data (Figure 1), Péter Magyar enjoys significantly greater popularity than Viktor Orbán. While 23% of respondents express a positive opinion of the prime minister, closely aligning with Fidesz-KDNP's overall support among the population (24%), Péter Magyar is favored by 50% of the total population. This number is well above the TISZA Party's support at 30% and more than double that of Viktor Orbán. Currently, Viktor Orbán elicits the most negative sentiments among respondents, with two-thirds of voters expressing disapproval of the prime minister, who governs with a two-thirds majority. Among those, 57% strongly reject him, while 10% expressed mild discontent. In contrast, only 21% of respondents harbor no favorable feelings towards Magyar, presumably supporting Fidesz-KDNP. Furthermore, another 16% indicated that they rather dislike him.
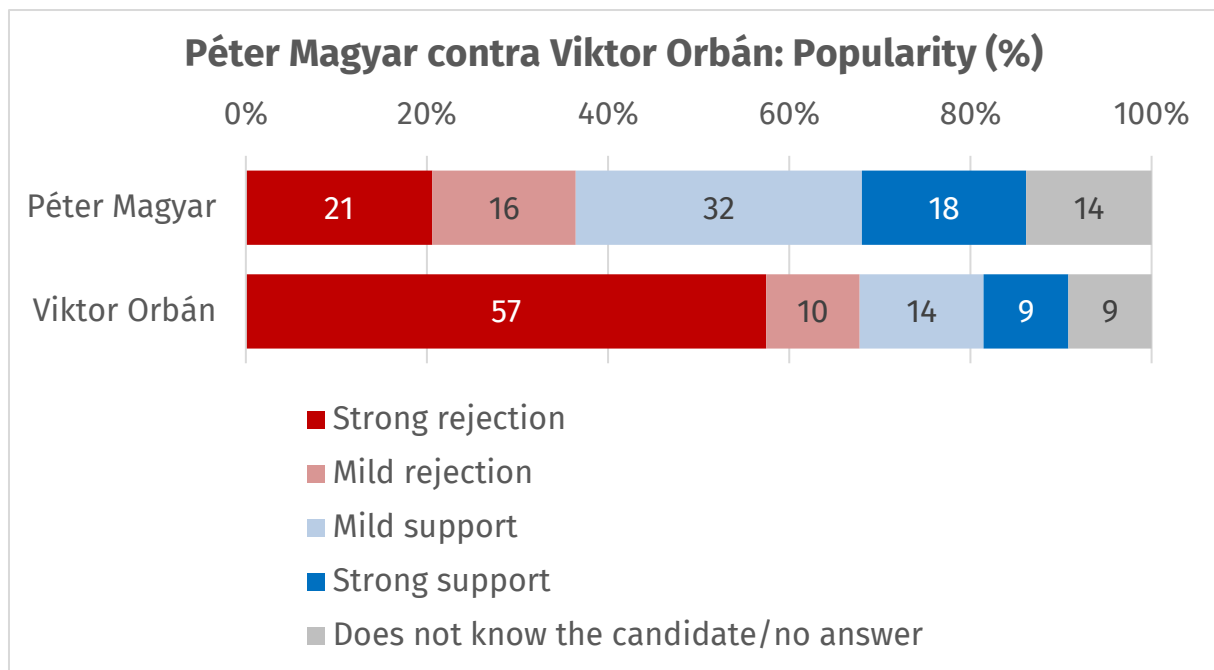
Péter Magyar contra Viktor Orbán: Popularity (%)

	Strong rejection	Mild rejection	Mild support	Strong support	Does not know the candidate/no answer
Péter Magyar	21	16	32	18	14
Viktor Orbán	57	10	14	9	9

Figure 1: Popularity of the leaders of the two major parties among the entire population (%).

In addition to the general popularity of the two politicians, we also examined the popularity of Viktor Orbán and Péter Magyar among specific social groups (Figures 2 and 3). The sample size is smaller here, so the margin of error is greater; however, the results are interesting and worth examining separately.

The most important and interesting data concerns the opinions of the two among undecided voters. Given the decline in support for Fidesz over the past year, one might assume that the peripheral supporters of Fidesz have disengaged from politics, which often happens between elections, suggesting that Fidesz could potentially reach these undecided voters in the final stretch of the election campaign. However, the data reflect a stark reality for the prime minister: 80% of undecided voters disapprove of Viktor Orbán, while only 6% hold a favorable opinion of him, representing about 2% of the total population. In contrast, Péter Magyar's ratings among undecided voters are significantly better. In this same group, 59% prefer the Tisza leader, while only 22% express dislike for him. It is through his appeal to undecided voters that Magyar's popularity surpasses that of Orbán. This indicates that Péter Magyar still has the potential to attract new voters, while Viktor Orbán seems to have exhausted his appeal for the time being.

Beyond this, as expected, Viktor Orbán enjoys significant support among his followers, particularly from the supporters of Fidesz-KDNP, where 76% of pro-government voters have a favorable view of him, while only 13% express disapproval. Additionally, one-third of Mi Hazánk voters also support him, which represents about 2% of the total population.
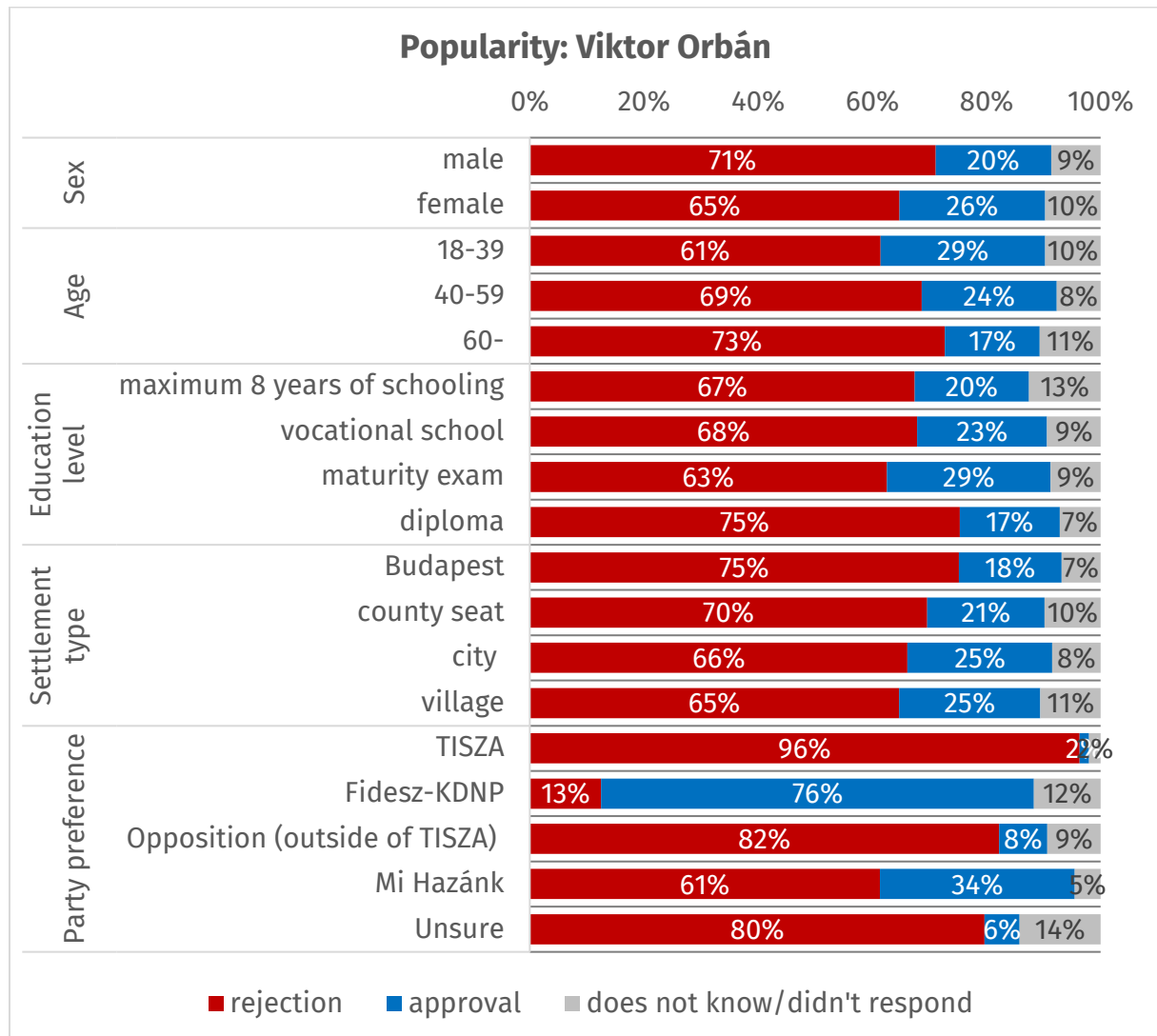
Popularity: Viktor Orbán

		rejection	approval	does not know/didn't respond
Sex	male	71%	20%	9%
	female	65%	26%	10%
Age	18-39	61%	29%	10%
	40-59	69%	24%	8%
	60-	73%	17%	11%
Education level	maximum 8 years of schooling	67%	20%	13%
	vocational school	68%	23%	9%
	maturity exam	63%	29%	9%
	diploma	75%	17%	7%
Settlement type	Budapest	75%	18%	7%
	county seat	70%	21%	10%
	city	66%	25%	8%
	village	65%	25%	11%
Party preference	TISZA	96%	2%	2%
	Fidesz-KDNP	13%	76%	12%
	Opposition (outside of TISZA)	82%	8%	9%
	Mi Hazánk	61%	34%	5%
	Unsure	80%	6%	14%

Figure 2: Viktor Orbán's approval in certain demographic groups

In terms of demographics, Viktor Orbán's popularity does not significantly stand out in any specific social group. Interestingly, in a recent October survey, he received more favorable ratings from young people compared to older adults. His least popular demographic consists of those over 60 years old, which explains why he has recently emphasized the concept of a 14th-month pension to appeal to the older

generation. When examining other demographic groups, Orbán's popularity tends to align with party preferences; individuals living in smaller towns and those with lower levels of education are less likely to oppose the prime minister.

Péter Magyar enjoys a favorable view from 83% of TISZA sympathizers. However, he also garners support from other voter groups, with 12% of the Fidesz-KDNP supporters and one-third of the opposition voters expressing mild approval. This suggests that opposition supporters outside of the TISZA party's supporter base are unlikely to vote for Magyar, as almost half of them disapprove of him. This group represents about 4-5% of the total population and could help a smaller opposition party gain seats in parliament, making them a target for the remaining opposition factions beyond the TISZA party. Interestingly, Magyar's appeal is stronger among older voters, with 57% approval, compared to just 42% among younger voters. Additionally, his support spans various demographic groups, indicating that he is not only popular among traditional opposition voters; his supporters are relatively evenly distributed across different education levels and types of settlements. In terms of gender, Magyar is more favored among men, with 55% approval, compared to 45% among women.
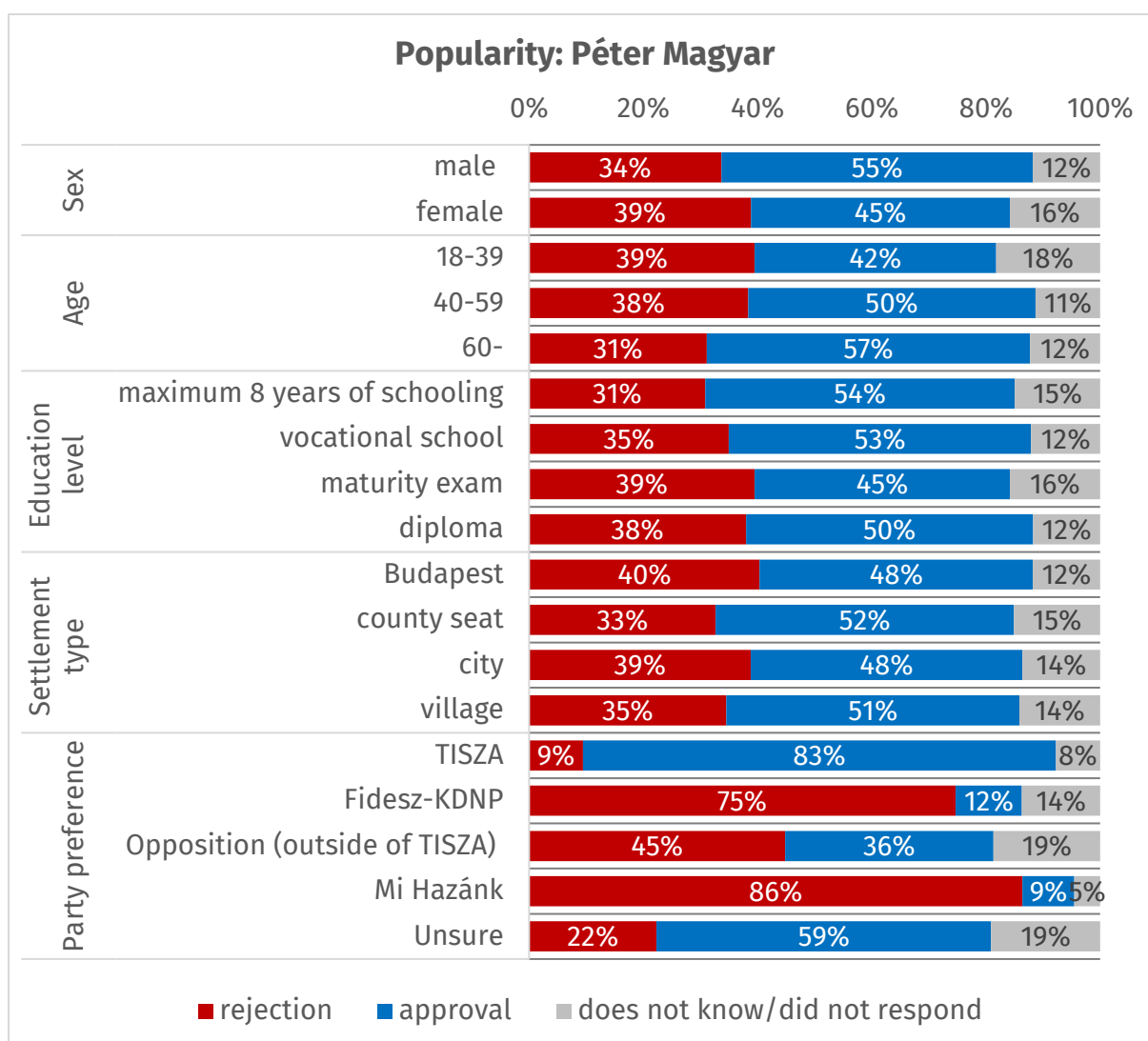
Popularity: Péter Magyar

Category	Group	rejection	approval	does not know/did not respond
Sex	male	34%	55%	12%
	female	39%	45%	16%
Age	18-39	39%	42%	18%
	40-59	38%	50%	11%
	60-	31%	57%	12%
Education level	maximum 8 years of schooling	31%	54%	15%
	vocational school	35%	53%	12%
	maturity exam	39%	45%	16%
	diploma	38%	50%	12%
Settlement type	Budapest	40%	48%	12%
	county seat	33%	52%	15%
	city	39%	48%	14%
	village	35%	51%	14%
Party preference	TISZA	9%	83%	8%
	Fidesz-KDNP	75%	12%	14%
	Opposition (outside of TISZA)	45%	36%	19%
	Mi Hazánk	86%	9%	5%
	Unsure	22%	59%	19%

Figure 3: Péter Magyar's approval in certain demographic groups

Popularity of other well-known politicians

In addition to Magyar and Orbán, we measured how voters feel about other well-known politicians (see Figure 4). Firstly, we looked at the popularity of two prominent politicians from the ruling parties: János Lázár and Judit Varga. Lázár is considered the "most important supporting actor" in Fidesz's campaign, many viewing him as Viktor Orbán's top alternative. There have been previous rumors suggesting he could become Fidesz's prime ministerial candidate or lead candidate. Judit Varga, who is Péter Magyar's ex-wife and a former Minister of Justice, has recently gained significant media attention, particularly due to rumors of her potential return and the possibility of her running as an independent in Péter

Magyar's constituency. It is important to assess her popularity because, during her time as a minister, she was fairly well-liked, though her reputation immensely suffered due to the Pegasus scandal and, more specifically, the pardon scandal. Both Judit Varga and János Lázár are favored by 12% of voters, which is only half of the Fidesz-KDNP support base. However, János Lázár is less popular overall, as nearly three-quarters of respondents express dislike for him, indicating that he has more disapprovers and fewer supporters compared to Viktor Orbán. In contrast, Judit Varga has a disapproval rate of 69%.

The Democratic Coalition's (DK) election campaign is centered around Klára Dobrev, making her popularity crucial for the party's success. Dobrev enjoys greater popularity than DK itself. 7% of respondents expressed support for her as the leader of a party, while 24% have a somewhat favorable view of her. However, more than half of the respondents dislike her, indicating that she is generally considered unpopular across the country. As DK is a party currently hovering around the parliamentary threshold, Dobrev's reputation is particularly significant. This is especially relevant given the party's past associations with Ferenc Gyurcsány, raising an interesting question of whether Dobrev's takeover in leadership would discourage core voters loyal to Gyurcsány, or could it potentially appeal to a broader audience, helping to overcome the obstacles associated with the "Gyurcsány ceiling"? At this point, it appears that the change in leadership has not significantly altered the party's popularity in either direction, and DK continues to struggle for entry into parliament. Gergely Kovács, the president of the Kutyapárt, enjoys significantly greater popularity than his party itself. Currently, the MKKP stands at 5% in party preferences. 13% of the total population holds a very favorable view of Kovács, while another 21% view him positively to some extent. This indicates that over a third of Hungarians have a favorable opinion of him, with only 26% expressing dislike. Notably, 41% of respondents were unable to form an opinion about him, suggesting that Kovács's name and personality are not central to the Kutyapárt's brand. In comparison, Mi Hazánk has 5% support among the total population, its leader, László Toroczkai, having a slightly better popularity rating than his party. Specifically, 6% of respondents expressed strong support for him, while another 9% had a somewhat positive view. However, Toroczkai faces significant criticism, with a

combined total of 59% of respondents indicating they dislike him. 41% completely disapprove of him, and 18% somewhat. Among the smaller parties, Imre Komjáthi, the president of the MSZP, stands out with some name recognition, even though 59% of respondents have no knowledge of him or are unable to assess his performance. Among those who do recognize him, support is more divided.

We also examined the views of two significant politicians who are not as closely associated with their former or current parties. Gergely Karácsony, the Mayor of Budapest, is one of the most prominent and undeniably popular opposition figures. He was a candidate for prime minister in the 2021 opposition primaries, where he received the second-highest number of votes after Dobrev in the first round. Since withdrawing from the race, he has concentrated on his role in the capital, which has further increased his approval. Karácsony is slightly more popular than Péter Magyar. 23% of the total population has a very favorable opinion of him, while an additional 32% view him somewhat favorably. This means that more than half of Hungarians have a positive opinion of him.

Ákos Hadházy has long been a prominent political figure, having been a member of several parties, most recently entering parliament as an independent representative of Zugló in cooperation with Momentum. His persona as a "corruption hunter," which he has been building for several years, has made him popular among opposition voters. He has received a lot of attention recently, and developments around Hatvanpuszta have brought him to the forefront of the political field in terms of voter interest. As a result, he is very popular, becoming the least "disliked" and most liked politician in our survey. 31% of the total population approves of him highly, and another 27% indicated mild support. Thanks to the anti-party sentiment, the two opposition politicians who have become the most popular in Hungary are the ones whose names are least associated with party membership in public discourse.
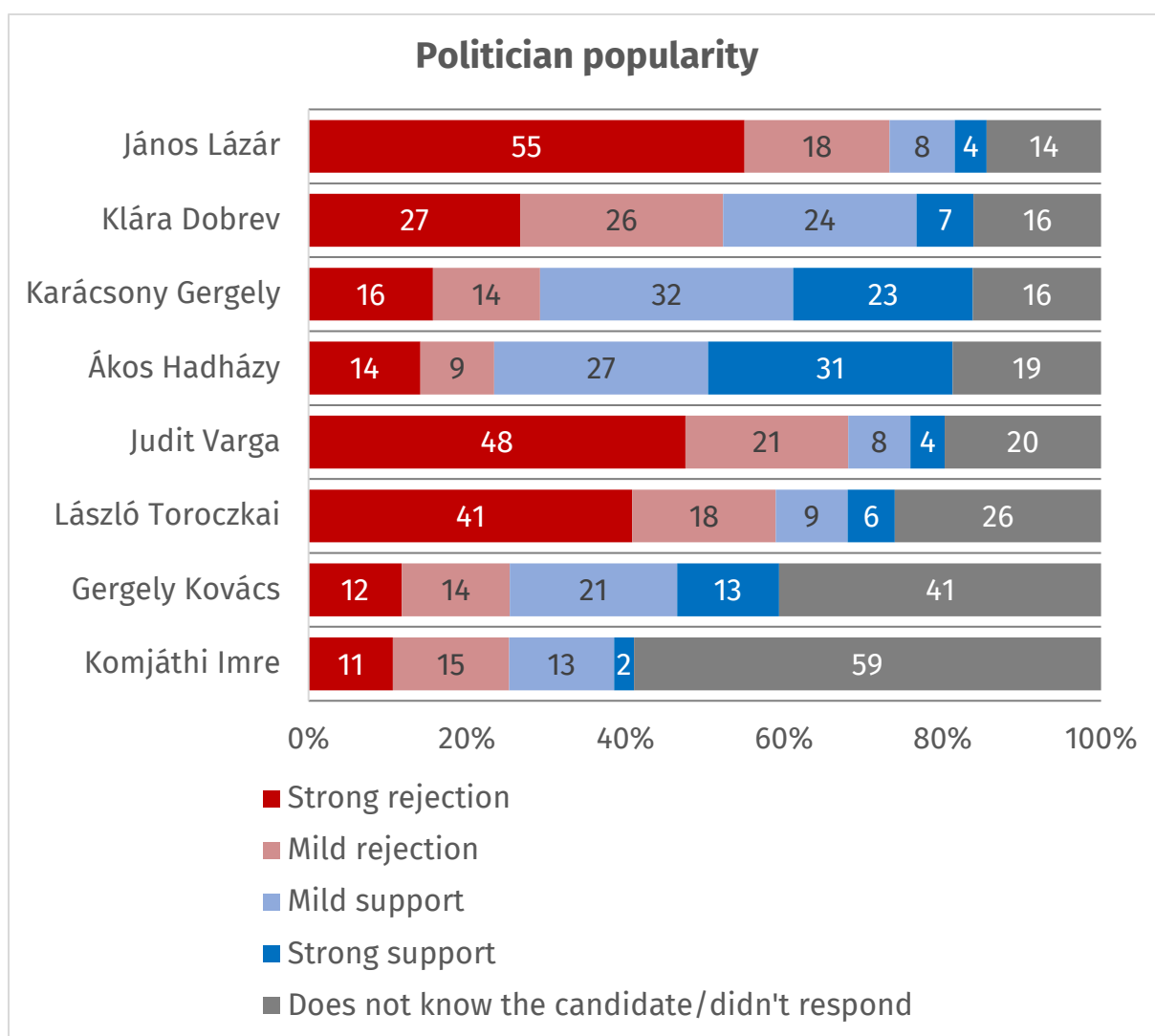
Politician popularity

Politician	Strong rejection	Mild rejection	Mild support	Strong support	Does not know the candidate/didn't respond
János Lázár	55	18	8	4	14
Klára Dobrev	27	26	24	7	16
Karácsony Gergely	16	14	32	23	16
Ákos Hadházy	14	9	27	31	19
Judit Varga	48	21	8	4	20
László Toroczkai	41	18	9	6	26
Gergely Kovács	12	14	21	13	41
Komjáthi Imre	11	15	13	2	59

Figure 4: Popularity and recognition of politicians among the entire population (%).

Although party preferences have shown a consistent lead for TISZA in recent months, Péter Magyar's advantage does not necessarily guarantee an election victory. The analysis of politicians' popularity reveals significant differences. For instance, Péter Magyar is twice as popular as Viktor Orbán, and his popularity transcends the usual demographic divides between parties, which may be a result of his extensive travels throughout the country. These surprising findings suggest a crisis of confidence in Viktor Orbán and other leading figures from Fidesz. A serious issue could be posed for the ruling party if both main candidates in the campaign, Orbán and János Lázár, are among the least popular politicians nationwide. Among undecided voters, many of whom appear to have distanced themselves from Fidesz,

Orbán's performance is notably poor, while Magyar's is unexpectedly strong. However, despite the focus on individual candidates, the role of political parties remains crucial during elections, particularly in individual constituencies. Despite these potential threats, Fidesz-KDNP does not necessarily face an insurmountable disadvantage, especially considering the electoral system, which favors them, as well as their media dominance, funding distribution, and other established circumstances. These factors contribute to an "exciting" electoral race.