

**The physical and mental health of Hungarians,  
Main indicators of health and well-being  
based on the Hungarostudy survey data (2006, 2013, 2021)**

**background material**

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**Introduction**

The physical and mental health of Hungarians has been studied by Professor Mária Kopp since 1988 as part of the Hungarostudy research. In 2021, the Mária Kopp Institute for Demography and Families (KINCS), in cooperation with the Institute of Behavioural Sciences of Semmelweis University, conducted the survey for the sixth time, with a representative sample of personal data.

The analysis provides data on the answers to questions on physical and mental well-being, which have been included in the last three consecutive surveys. Responses are also presented by sex and, where there is a significant difference, by age (18-29 years and 30 years and over). The questions were the same across the different data collections (where they were not indicated), but the respondents were always different, so although the trends in the main variables and thus in physical and mental health among the Hungarian population can be reviewed, the study cannot be considered as a follow-up.

The number of respondents was 4841 individuals in 2006, 2000 individuals in 2013 and 7000 in 2021.

**Executive summary**

**Physical health**

- Self-assessed health has been improving steadily since 2006. Men generally assess their health as being better, as naturally do young people.
- The percentage of the total population within the normal bodyweight category increased between 2006 and 2013 and remained unchanged until 2021.
- There is a slight decrease in the proportion of people complaining of body aches and pains between 2006 and 2013. By 2021, the proportion of people not complaining of pain improved significantly.
- The number of smokers in the total population has increased slightly since 2006, with one third of respondents smoking daily. However, there is a positive trend among young people, where the number of smokers is decreasing.
- Alcohol consumption shows a positive trend, with the proportion of frequent drinkers decreasing and the proportion of infrequent drinkers increasing. The number of non-drinkers has increased since 2013. Among young people between 2006-2013, the proportion of regular drinkers increased, and by 2021 the proportion of those who never drink alcohol has increased.
- Physical activity has improved for the whole population since 2013, with the proportion of those who have never exercised decreasing significantly and the proportion of weekly exercisers increasing, especially among women.

## **Mental health**

- Between 2006 and 2013, levels of overall satisfaction and happiness decreased. However, between 2013 and 2021 it increased significantly, especially among women, who reached the same level as men. There was a similar change by age group, but with only a smaller improvement among young people
- The WHO-5 well-being questionnaire, which measures the well-being of respondents in the respective past two weeks, showed a steady improvement since 2006, with a greater improvement between 2013 and 2021.
- Levels of depression have decreased in the general population, with a greater decrease among women. However, the proportion of young people with major depression increased between 2013 and 2021.

## **Background factors**

- While anomie, weakening social values and norms characterized the 2006-2013 period, between 2013 and 2020, the strength of societal values improved.
- Between 2006 and 2013, the value of solidarity and coherence declined sharply, and then increased significantly again by 2021.
- Perceived Stress Questionnaire scores indicate that the ability to cope with stress in society has improved significantly, though with a higher level of stress found among young people found when examining various age groups.
- Marital stress scores increased between 2006 and 2013, and then remained unchanged for men until 2021, while it decreased significantly for women after 2013.
- In terms of religious practice, the proportion of non-believers is increasing, while in terms of those religious “in their own way” is increasing.
- The proportion of people who practice their religion regularly or occasionally is the highest among people with a higher education.
- The proportion of people who consider religion important increased from 53% in 2013 to 60% in 2021.