

HUNGARY

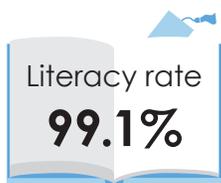
A **landlocked country in Central Europe**, Hungary borders Slovakia, Ukraine, Austria, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia, and is a member of the European Union. Hungary was inhabited by a succession of semi-nomadic tribes before becoming a part of the Ottoman and then Habsburg Empires beginning in the 16th century. Only after World War I did Hungary emerge as an independent nation. Hungary joined the Axis Powers during World War II and became a Soviet satellite state. Lake Balton, the largest in Central Europe, is located in Hungary, and the country is a popular destination for its spas and hot springs. The official language is Hungarian. Electronics manufacturing, information technology, and food processing are the largest industries in the Hungarian economy, which maintains its own currency, the forint.



Population
9,825,704



35,912 MI²
Slightly smaller than
Virginia

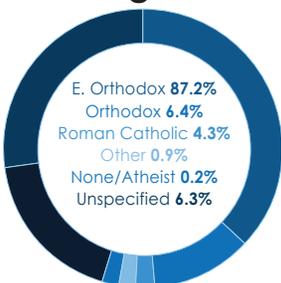


Literacy rate
99.1%

Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

Family plays a large role in the social structure. In the post-communist period, families have become smaller and ties with extended families have decreased, although they may live in close proximity to one another. Grandparents still play a very important role in the lives of their grandchildren, often helping to raise them.

Most households consist of parents and an average of two children. In Hungary, every second marriage ends with divorce, therefore the number of single parents is high. Children typically stay with their mothers after divorce. Typically both parents work, however men are traditionally looked at as the provider. The burden of household management and caring for tasks related to children falls mostly on mothers.

Immediate family members will often provide emotional and financial support to each other. Much of people's free time revolves around being with the family. Food plays a large role, with families passing down cooking traditions as well as sharing home-cooked meals together. Although many Hungarians are moving abroad to find employment opportunities, they continue to maintain strong ties with their immediate family.

FRIENDSHIP

Hungarians enjoy hosting and socializing with friends and family. Food is often a major point of socializing and pride. Teenagers make most of their friends through school or extracurricular activities, and not necessarily from family or neighborhood connections. There is a difference between friends and acquaintances. The word "friend" is reserved for strong, close relationships.

SCHOOL LIFE

High school students have around 12-15 mandatory subjects in a school year depending on the type of the school. In addition to these, optional subjects are available if the student is interested in a certain area. Classes meet 3-5 times a week, depending on the subject. A high school student typically has 7-8 classes a day and the length of a class is usually 45 minutes. In addition to classroom education, students may take field trips to the forest, museums, libraries, or exhibitions. Classes are held five days a week (six, in exceptional cases).

High school students are evaluated by oral presentations in front of the class, written tests consisting most typically of short or longer essay questions, and homework. Class participation is

encouraged and taken into account but not as much as written and oral testing. Boys and girls are not separated except in the case of private religious schools.

Teenagers do not dress up for school. They wear jeans and t-shirts, but most of the clothes are ironed.

FOOD

Typical Hungarian food is heavy on dairy, cheese, and meats, and is famous for its high quality and relatively inexpensive salamis and sausages. Paprika, a quintessential spice and pepper, is often associated with Hungary and is used prominently in a handful of dishes. People usually have a large breakfast, consisting of an open-face sandwich with fresh bread or toast, butter, cheese (or different cream cheeses), and cured meats. Fresh tomatoes and green peppers are served with these, seasonally. Eggs may also be part of breakfast.

Being a vegetarian is rare. Recently, there is more awareness about gluten and lactose intolerances. In more religious places in the countryside and small towns, it is more common for people to fast according to religious requirements such as no meat on Fridays or no meat on the day before Christmas, or for the 40 days preceding Easter.

RELIGION

Hungarian society is largely secular and most people attend religious services only on major religious holidays. Some families do go to Sunday mass and engage in youth activities organized by the church, but this is not very common. Recently, the government mandated weekly religious classes at school. The religious class may be substituted with an ethics course for those who are not religious, or for personal reasons.

PERSONAL CARE

Teenagers are often expected to shower daily; twice if they are involved in physical activities. It is common for a teenager to use a washing machine. Clothes dryers are rare. Most people have one towel per member in the home which is used to dry off after bathing. The same towel may be used more than once before it is washed.



The Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. FLEX provides competitively selected secondary school students from 21 countries in Europe and Eurasia with the opportunity to spend the academic year in the U.S. living with a volunteer host family and attending a host high school. Begun in 1993, FLEX now has over 27,000 alumni.