



# RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS N° 21

## BIRTHS OUTSIDE MARRIAGE IN HUNGARY

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Over the last few decades, the share of live births outside marriage has increased quickly in Hungary (Figure 1). While in the middle of the twentieth century less than a tenth of total live births were outside marriage, by 2013 almost half of them (46 per cent) were extramarital. The tendency is more pronounced among first-born children: in 1990 16 per cent were born to unmarried mothers, but by 2013 their proportion was more than three times higher (53 per cent). During this period people's attitudes towards non-marital childbearing also changed significantly in Hungary. According to the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), in 1988 almost two-thirds of the population did not approve of having children without or before marriage, as indicated by agreement with the statement 'People who want children ought

to get married'. Six years later only half of the respondents had the same opinion, and in 2013 the proportion of people who agreed with the statement stood at just 40 per cent (Figure 2). Disagreement with the statement also became more widespread. Hence, in 1988 only about quarter of the Hungarian population accepted having children before marriage, while after the millennium their share had increased to 39 per cent; ten years later, however, it decreased to 33 per cent (Figure 2).

The share of extramarital births has risen rapidly since the end of the 1980s, and during this time attitudes toward the phenomenon have become more accepting. The majority, however, still think that people ought to get married before they have children.

Figure 1. Share of live births outside marriage in Hungary, 1980–2013  
Source: HCSO.

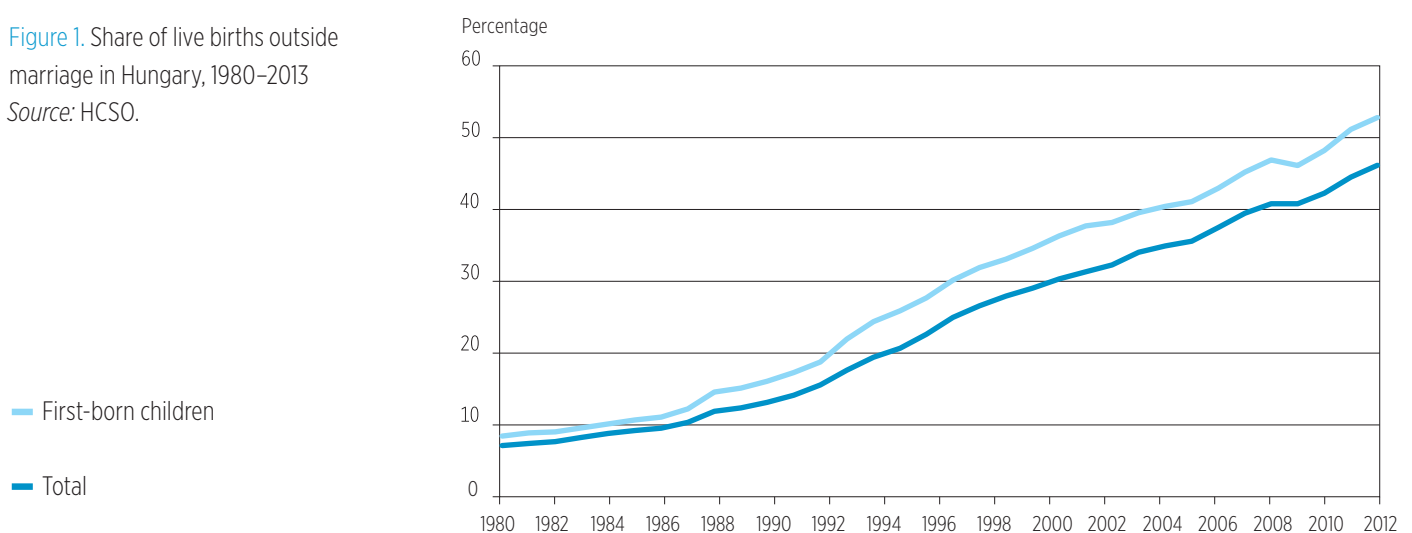


Figure 2. Distribution of opinions concerning the statement: 'People who want children ought to get married' in 1988, 1994, 2002 and 2013  
Source: ISSP (Hungarian database), own calculation.

