

International Migration - Major Trends in Demography: A Hungarian Example

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Abstract

Besides fertility and mortality and the balance between the two, migration also influences population development in terms of size, sex and age composition. Through the analysis of population development in Hungary, this paper investigated the role of international migration in demographic processes. We have followed closely the process in which, after the demographic catastrophes in Hungarian history (1239-1290 and 1550-1650), the missing population was replaced by foreigners settling down in Hungary. The role played by this settled population has been examined as well. We have outlined the effects of the third demographic disaster (1914-20), which has determined the development of Hungarian population up till the present day. As a consequence of the peace treaties at the end of World War I Hungary lost two-thirds of its population, thereby changing the structure of the population profoundly. Besides the above-mentioned processes we have demonstrated the direct and indirect effects of contemporary migration on the development of population size. We have also dealt with the migratory losses caused by the revolution of 1956 and the decades afterwards and we have shown the way net migration has influenced the composition of the Hungarian population between 1881 and 1990. The migratory balance of Hungary has been negative ever since 1901, which has also contributed to the fact that the Hungarian population started decreasing two decades before this occurred in the majority of European states.

Keywords: Hungarian, demographic processes, population, international migration

Even at the moment the Hungarian state was founded, the fathers of our country realized the importance of the role that “guests“, “newcomers“, or to use today’s terminology, immigrants play in the life of the country. Hungary’s first king, Saint Stephen (1000–1038), established a policy that clearly favored the admission of outsiders into the kingdom: the migration policies elaborated in his Admonitions to his son, Prince

Emeric, are considered exemplary even by today's standards¹. Stephen's policies, furthermore, were continued by his successors, and his approach more or less determined the treatment of migration issues in Hungary up to the end of World War II.

After World War II, however, everything changed. At the end of the war, the victorious great powers relegated Hungary to the part of Europe controlled by the Soviet Union, and Hungary, like other Soviet satellite countries, was forced to endure communism. After 1948 all spontaneous or uncontrolled processes were considered suspicious by the new power structure because of the inherent risk of anti-state activities, and international migration, being a spontaneous process, was considered antithetical to the system.

During the decades of socialist isolation that followed, all subjects relating to international migration involving Hungary, such as the falling number of inhabitants or the deteriorating age structure of the population, were strictly taboo. In fact, as far as the former regime was concerned, migration did not exist, even though hundreds of thousands of people left the country either legally or illegally during the "happy" decades of socialism and there was some immigration into Hungary as well. Migration statistics were kept under secret classification and only officials of the Ministry of the Interior had access to the data. Migration figures were also consistently left out of census calculations until as recently as 1990, the year that the political system changed.

Since the collapse of the socialist socioeconomic system in 1990, the aforementioned issues have no longer been kept secret. In fact, it is now common knowledge among the Hungarian public that the country's population has been shrinking at an accelerating rate since 1981 and the age structure is simultaneously getting worse. Emigration and immigration are now matters of public record, and anyone can access facts and figures on refugees, immigrants or applications for Hungarian citizenship².

¹ "Guests and newcomers bring so many benefits ... as they come from other countries and kingdoms, they bring with them their different idioms, customs, practices and weapons, all of which adorn the kingdom, add to the splendour of the royal court, and give foreigners less to boast about. A country of a single language and custom is weak and fallible; therefore I instruct you, son, that you should support and cherish newcomers so that they will prefer staying with you to living elsewhere. Should you choose to destroy what I have built or disperse what I have gathered, your country would indeed suffer a tremendous loss. To avoid that, add to your kingdom each day so that people will look up to your mighty crown." (István király 1988.)

² Migration data is available for example at the website (www.b-m.hu) of the Ministry of the Interior of Hungary.

The purpose of this analysis

Fertility plays a pre-eminent role among the factors that determine the size and the gender and age breakdown of a population. However, fertility is not an absolute determinant: mortality and population movements are also important factors.

The idea of supplementing or replacing a reduced population with immigrants is not a new one, although in Hungary it has not been put into practice for two hundred years. After the Magyars established themselves in the Carpathian Basin, they successfully used outsiders several times to settle sparsely inhabited lands or repopulate de-peopled areas. Thus, in the course of Hungarian history this method was not only given consideration, but also put into practice again and again, for example, when the Kuns, Jazygians or Germans were settled in Hungary following the period of Turkish rule. Furthermore, international migration has not only affected the size, reproduction and composition of the Hungarian population in the distant past, it continues to do so today. Although there are significant differences between today's international migration and past efforts to invite outsiders to settle and repopulate, there are also many similarities in the way these phenomena have influenced population development.

Limitations of the methodology

If we consider what basic research and what data sets we have for this analysis, our undertaking could be thought of as either irresponsible or foolhardy. The validity of this study is affected by the dearth and inaccuracy of data concerning migration after 1947, and the results of historical demographic research in this field, not to mention that the need for this kind of research has newly arisen as a result of declining European populations. We must be aware that many interpretation errors and uncertainties may arise because international migration is one of the most difficult phenomena to measure statistically, and interpretation of the existing data is a lot more complex than that of other kinds of population development.

If we wish to define the retrospective role of international migration in population development, or the size of the positive migration balance necessary to slow down or stop the shrinking of the population and to reverse the present tendencies, we need to know the number, sex and age of those leaving the country and of those arriving in Hungary at the same time and with a similar purpose. Monitoring immigrants is not an easy task, but it is incomparably easier and simpler than monitoring emigrants. Two large groups of emigrants can be distinguished. One consists of people arriving who intend to settle down but after a while give up this status for some reasons and either go back to their home country or travel on. The other group of emigrants comprises those Hungarian citizens who leave the country temporarily or for good. A subgroup of the latter consists of people who gave up their Hungarian citizenship before they left the country.

Before 1990 each Hungarian citizen had to fill out a data sheet at the border when returning from abroad. With these data, demographic, sociological and other analyses could have been made with regard to migration. The data, however, were inaccessible, and in the new situation no one has attempted to process them. After 1990, when conditions were created for free travel, this kind of control was abolished. To replace it, a decree stipulated that Hungarian citizens wishing to stay abroad for more than three months had to report their stay abroad to the local Mayor's Office. Despite the decree, this system is not operational at present. As a result - with the exception of those who give up their Hungarian citizenship - we do not have data for emigrating Hungarians. In their case we need to rely on estimations, and thus our study, which already contains several assumptions, is further burdened with another factor of uncertainty. Perhaps the smallest mistake is made if we assume that after 1990, the year of free travel, at least as many people, including those who gave up their Hungarian citizenship, emigrated annually as before. Between 1960 and 1990 the annual number of legal and illegal emigrants was between 1,886 and 7,880. (Tóth 1997.) The average of the two extreme values is 4,383. This means that in the past decade, not counting foreign nationals who have left Hungary, the number of emigrating Hungarian citizens was at least 45,000–50,000. Naturally, this is an estimate which can only be accepted with reservations, given the fact that if the number of those leaving through this "channel" exceeds the number arriving, even if we assume large-scale immigration, the population will be even further reduced. Furthermore, we have data neither on the number, age or gender of emigrating Hungarian citizens during this period, nor on people who left the country sometimes during the past fifty years and decided to return following the collapse of the communist system in 1990.

As a result of what we have outlined, and other problems and deficiencies, the balance of migration can only be defined in an approximate way; that is, our statements concerning the role of migration in the past and in the future will necessarily be of an approximate and fragmentary nature. In spite of all this, our study contributes to what we know about domestic population development and will hopefully call attention to interrelations that may provide useful assistance in analyzing population decrease.

A look backward – the effect of migration before the 1870s

The development of man and the development history of his activities are in close connection with his migration. Man's need for sustenance, his desire to learn, his pursuit of a home, his compulsion to settle, his will to conquer and his flight from natural disasters all determined and motivated the migration of human communities for a long time. It happened the same way with the Hungarians, who, after long centuries of wandering arrived from the original homeland in Levedia at the beginning of

the 9th century A.D., from where due to Pecheneg attacks they went on to Etelköz in 889 A.D. The renewed attacks by the Pecheneg forced them to move on. That is how, led by Arpad, they arrived in the Carpathian Basin in 896 A.D. where the Arpad Dynasty founded a state and established the European history of the Hungarian people which continues to this day.

Thus like other peoples the Hungarians had to travel far before some 1100 years ago they settled in present-day Hungary. We do not know the number of those arriving and the number of strangers accompanying them; estimates put the figure at about 400,000–500,000. Researchers estimate the number of those people that the Hungarians assimilated during the following two centuries at about 200,000. At the risk of oversimplification, we can say that between the creation of Hungarian statehood and the First World War, population development in Hungary was supported by three “sources“. One was the incoming and state-founding Hungarians and their descendants, the vast majority of whom settled in the central areas of the country, who can be considered as the starting point, the basis and the dominant factor of the whole population development. The second source is the original peoples and their descendants who predated the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin. The third is those ethnic groups and their descendants that the Hungarians at various times allowed to enter their territories and accepted as settlers. The intertwined, sometimes simultaneous population development of these three groups complemented one another in an organic way, while the original peoples found here and the ones finding a home here (and some of their descendants) became Hungarians in the course of coexistence. Parallel with this process, many Hungarians also integrated into one or another group of the peoples living beside them. Of the two processes, the dominant one up to World War I was the Hungarization of non-Hungarians.³ The intertwined and unifying development history of these three ethnic factors made it possible that the number of those living in the region may have reached 1.8–2.2 million by the end of the 12th century. Naturally it would be useful to know exactly what role was played in this process by the fertility of the Hungarians, those that had already been living here, the Pechenegs who settled in the 11th and 12th centuries, the Uz people, the Kuns, the Jazygians and their descendants. This, however, we do not know and cannot estimate.

This “order“ of population development was interrupted by the first demographic catastrophe which was primarily generated by the Mongol invasion between 1239 and 1290. There was an attempt to replace the missing population with French, German, Italian, Walloon and other settlers. After this break in the trend, as a result of a

³ To illuminate the process, we could take as an example the important role in Hungarian history of the Balthazy family, whose origins are gutkeled (German) and who can trace their lineage back to the time of Arpad. We could also mention the outstanding “Hungarian“ of Swiss origin in more recent times, Abraham Ganz (1814–1867). According to the 1910 census, 54.5% of the population of the Hungarian Kingdom (18,264,533) declared themselves to be Hungarians.

relatively even development for about three hundred years, the population grew to 3.5–4 million by the beginning of the 16th century. According to estimated figures about 80% of the population at this time spoke Hungarian as their first language. This development trend, however, was broken from the second half of the 1500s by the fight against the Turks and their presence for 150 years in Hungary. Turkish rule resulted in such a large-scale reduction in the size of the population that it constitutes a second demographic disaster. By the beginning of the 18th century the population was not only reduced to the level of two hundred years before (3.5 million), but its composition was also again drastically changed. As a result, the proportion of native speakers of Hungarian fell to 38% of the whole population by the 1700s. Such a great change in the proportion between Hungarian and non-Hungarian speakers was due to the significant deterioration of the central areas inhabited by Hungarians, further growth of the Slavic and Rumanian population living in the hills, the large number of Croats and Serbs seeking refuge in the country, and the settlement of Germans in abandoned areas. Though after the second demographic disaster, wars, epidemics, famine and so on further reduced the number of the population, large-scale population development can nonetheless be seen by the end of the 19th century. With the above information we think that it was no mere chance that nearly 110 years ago Karoly Keleti⁴, member of the Hungarian Academy of Science, asked the question: “how did this nation multiply so much, that amongst a thousand disasters, after tremendous losses that devastated the noblest blood of the nation still there are 18.5 million of us living in our Hungarian homeland under St. Stephen’s crown“(Keleti 1892).

A satisfactory and exact answer cannot be given to this question; but we think that in the population growth that took place before 1880, though in varying degrees at different times, the fertility of the aforementioned three ethnic factors was manifested.

Up to the first quarter or first half of the 19th century, before modern migration, the size of the population was not substantially affected by individual migration; it was, however, affected by the arrival and settlement of entire population groups all at once or over relatively short periods of time. As mentioned earlier, some of those peoples admitted and settling down over the ages – like some of descendants of the peoples that already inhabited the region at the time of the Hungarian occupation – “became“ Hungarians. (Table 1) When analyzing the figures, consideration must be given to the fact that they already incorporate modern international migration reaching Hungary, and also that after 1880 no more significantly large groups settled in Hungary.

⁴ Károly Keleti (1833–1892) Statistician, first Director of the Hungarian National Office for Statistics.

Table 1. The proportion of nationalities within the population of the Hungarian Kingdom between 1880 and 1910.

Nationality	1880		1900		1910	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Hungarian	6,404,070	46.6	8,651,520	51.4	9,944,627	54.5
German	1,870,272	13.6	1,999,060	11.9	1,903,357	10.2
Slovak	1,855,451	13.5	2,002,156	11.9	1,946,357	10.7
Rumanian	2,403,041	17.5	2,798,559	16.6	2,948,186	16.1
Ruthenian	353,229	2.6	424,774	2.5	464,270	2.5
Croatian	–	–	196,781	1.2	198,700	1.1
Serb	639,986	4.6	520,440	3.1	545,833	3.0
Other	223,054	1.6	244,956	1.4	313,203	1.7
Total	13,749,603	100.0	16,838,255	100.0	18,264,533	100.0

Based on the sketch of population development and the figures of the above table it is clear that besides the descendants of Hungarians and of those already living here before the Hungarian occupation, the newcomers, the immigrants (those who were settled in the country) and their descendants played a remarkable and important role in the growth of domestic population. And it must also be remembered that the newcomers and their descendants, along with a part of the original inhabitants, not only added to the population as part of the nationalities listed in the table, but also as Hungarized individuals. A separate study would be needed to find out when and to what extent each nationality integrated with the Hungarian population, and in how much numeric growth it resulted in. Even without that we can establish that after the Hungarian occupation, apart from the fragmentary groups of the “other“ line of the table by the end of the 18th century, it was only the Germans that survived as a significantly large, independent ethnic group, while they themselves contributed to the growth of the Hungarian population. To this review of population development we must add that the majority of the Hungarians were living on the Hungarian Plain, and it was here that the Hungarization of the newcomers already living in, coming to, or being settled in the region was the most intensive and most advanced.

It can be established that the main lines of this “mechanism“ of population development were working well up to the 1870s, because with the exception of the group movement of some of the Transylvanians, no numerically large group left the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom. Naturally, before 1870 immigrants not only arrived in Hungary in groups but individually as well. Their number, however, was not significant and the contemporary picture would be distorted if we minimized the demographic impact of emigrants and immigrants in the population processes before 1870. After this year, though, the earlier role of migration in population development under-

goes considerable change. The admission and settlement of immigrants that had played a dominant role up to that time became less important in the following decades and were replaced by modern-age migration, which, unlike earlier movements of population, was characterized by spontaneity, a massive nature and an economic motivation at the same time. The new type of migration reached Hungary, with a 30-year delay relative to Western Europe, in the 1870s. The change is tangible, since while the number of emigrants in the 1860s is insignificant, their number from the first half of the 1870s to the end of the decade shows a steep upward trend. During the following few years, that is in the first half of the 1890s, this number stays approximately the same. In this period about 550,000–600,000 Hungarian citizens emigrated, primarily to countries overseas. From 1898 on, the number of emigrants was on the rise again. The peak of emigration was between 1905 and 1907. In 1907, for example, out of every 1,000 inhabitants, 8.5 went to America. There was, however, a considerable drop in the number of emigrants. On the whole between 1892 and 1913 nearly 2 million people left the country and of these only a small number returned for good. Before the outbreak of World War I nearly 74% of the emigrants were men, and three quarters of them were in the age group 20–49. Most of them belonged to the age group 20–29. The percentage of those older than 50 is negligible (2.6%). The Hungarian Kingdom was a multinational country, which was clearly reflected by the ethnic composition of migrants. Between 1899 and 1913 26.8% of the emigrants were Slovaks, 26.3% were Hungarians, 16.6% were Croatians and 15% were Germans. The proportion of migrants belonging to other ethnicities – with the exception of Rumanians, which was 6.9% – stayed below 5%. For two decades after 1870, despite the massive number of emigrants, the balance of international migration was still positive. Following 1900, though, in the slowing down of population growth and then in the shrinking of the population – besides decreased fertility – the absence of migration played a part. This was recognized early on. As early as the 1891 census the population-decreasing effect of emigration was discussed in detail. This trend was considered dangerous for the future and the socioeconomic development of the nation. In order to reduce its ramifications, emigration was legally regulated as early as 1903 (Thirring 1904). The loss of population caused by migration led to a project in which attempts were made to repatriate some of the emigrants. Not much of the scheme was realized, since only about seven to eight thousand people returned to Hungary.

It must be pointed out that before 1910 population growth in the areas within the borders of present-day Hungary was above the national average because significantly more people moved to central areas of the Hungarian Kingdom from the outskirts than vice versa. The population of these areas grew from 5,011,310 to 7,612,114 between 1870 and 1910. The majority of those moving to the central part of the country were recruited from the nationality of the respective region, becoming Hungarized as a consequence of their mobility. The higher population growth of the central areas was also due to the fact that emigration among Hungarians was lower compared to their percentage in the total population than among other ethnic groups.

As a ramification of the conditions in the peace treaty concluding World War I, the first epoch of Hungarian population development, which had been shaped in an organic process, came to an end. The 1920 census figures reflected the demographic characteristics of a completely different country. Those reserves of population development that we have analyzed so far were no longer there. Following the migration of the first years after the war – if we disregard the reflux of people to the territories regained between 1938 and 1941 – only the forced or spontaneous migration of ethnic Hungarians to Hungary can be observed coming from the former Hungarian territories that were joined to the successor states. The loss of population caused by World War I together with the direct and indirect consequences of the Trianon decision were so grave that they can be thought of as the third demographic disaster in the history of the country's population. As a result of the Trianon Treaty the area of the country was reduced from 325,411 km² to 93,073 km² and the population went down from 18,264,533 to 7,986,879. The Treaty, in effect, concluded the process going on for centuries in which in the central region of the country the proportion of native Hungarians increased much more significantly compared to the national average and to other regions. Drastic reshaping of the borders necessarily resulted in considerable forced migration. We do not know the exact number of those fleeing from neighboring countries to Hungary or of ethnic Hungarians emigrating to other countries of the world. On the other hand, the size of forced migration is clearly demonstrated by the fact that between 1919 and 1924 from the territory annexed by Rumania alone approximately 200,000, and during the following ten years a further 130,000 people arrived in Hungary. Still to be analyzed is how those who were forced to move to Hungary from neighboring countries influenced population development. On the basis of their education and profession, though (most of them were civil servants and professionals), it can be assumed that they belonged to the older generation. The Treaty put an end to the multinational nature of the country and the percentage of Hungarians within the total population grew from the earlier 54.5% to almost 90%. As a result of the territorial distribution of ethnic Hungarians, the Treaty had the consequence that one-third of the Hungarians were left outside the newly defined Hungarian borders.

The catastrophic break in population development was somewhat reduced when the pre-war freedom or unregulated state of international migration ceased to exist, but there was no way it could have been counterbalanced. In 1913 it was already clear that the conditions for international migration had changed. This, however, became evident only when the United States severely restricted immigration in 1917. As a result, in 1921, 15 years after the annual number of those arriving at American ports had been 180,000, only 5,747 Hungarian citizens were granted an immigration permit. Thus the loss of population caused by emigration was 0.6% of the total population, which, compared to the figure before 1913, is insignificant. In the new situation, in the two decades between 1920 and 1940, the number of emigrants did not reach fifty thousand.

Table 2. Ethnic distribution of the population of the Hungarian Kingdom in 1910 and in 1920.

Nationality	1910		1920	
	People	%	People	%
Hungarian	9,944,627	54.5	7,155,973	89.6
Rumanian	2,948,186	16.1	23,695	0.3
Slovak	1,946,357	10.7	141,877	1.8
German	1,903,357	10.4	550,062	6.9
Serb	545,833	3.0	17,132	0.2
Ruthenian (Carpathian-Ukraine)	464,270	2.5	—	—
Croatian	198,700	1.1	58,931	0.7
Others	313,203	1.7	39,199	0.5
Total	18,264,533	100.0	7,986,869	100.0

Source: Glatz 1992, THH 1987

The migration balance of Hungary in the 20th century, as we have pointed out, became negative. It is true, however, that after World War I and II, due to the considerable influx of (Hungarian) people, the balance becomes positive, but with this a new process begins: while the number of Hungarians living in Hungary and in other countries of the world is gradually diminishing, the area inhabited by Hungarians is getting smaller. The cause of this process, apart from the integration of those living in the diaspora, natural assimilation, integration and negative natural change, is that the migration of Hungarians from neighboring countries to Hungary, with varying intensity, has become continuous. The decrease in the number of Hungarians has a different role, weight and importance in Hungary, in neighboring countries and in other parts of the world, but this is beyond the scope of our study.

Following the First World War, the shrinking or the aging of the population was not apparent, at least not on the surface. In spite of this it was well recognized that to make up for the population loss caused by the world war, to replace the population of productive age killed in the war and to counterbalance the nearly 50% decrease in the number of births, more than one generation would be required. In later decades the reduced number of those capable of founding families would cause another, though smaller, dip in the population, and then the whole cycle would begin again (MSK 1932).

Looking back now, however, it is clear that between 1920 and 1930 the aging of the population had already started, generated by the growing life-expectancy, in addition to diminished fertility and the age of those seeking refuge in Hungary. The fact that this phenomenon was not the focus of attention in 1930 is understandable, since the temporary increase of children under five did not at this time reveal the problem that was to become more and more serious in a few decades.

The framework laid down for Hungary in 1920 was changed as early as November 2nd, 1938, before World War II. At this point, on the basis of the First Vienna Decision the Czechoslovak territory predominantly inhabited by Hungarians (and 90% of the Hungarians in Czechoslovakia) was returned to Hungary. This was followed by the re-annexation of Sub-Carpathia in the middle of March 1939, of Northern Transylvania in September 1940, and of Southern Hungary in the spring of 1941. As a result by 1941 the area of the country became 78 680 km² larger and the population increased by 4,919,567 (Table 3). Thus between 1938 and 1941 because of this specific kind of “migration“, or, to put it more exactly, from the changing of the borders,⁵ more than five million people became Hungarian citizens without leaving their homes. As a consequence of this change, the percentage of non-Hungarian ethnics within the total population increased again, as in the reannexed territories the proportion of ethnic Hungarians was just above 50%. When the territories were reannexed, of course, many of the Hungarians who had moved to Hungary when the borders were originally redrawn now emigrated back to their home areas; or, more specifically, the re-modification of the borders caused population movements across the borders in both directions, according to ethnic group. This process involved 200,000–250,000 people in Northern Transylvania alone. The migration balance once again becomes positive in this decade as a result of these population movements, although the migration is due primarily to necessity and not to choice.

Table 3. Ethnic composition of the territories reannexed by Hungary between 1938 and 1941.

Nationality	Upper Hungary	Sub-Carpathia	Northern Transylvania	Southern Hungary
Hungarian	75,951	63,025	1,343,695	348,840
German	17,354	57,435	47,508	178,221
Slovak	84,905	20,449	20,885	30,153
Rumanian	360	11,385	1,069,211	385
Croatian	223	141	83	8,994
Serb	26,171	13	108	150,336
Ruthenian	8,941	342,029	20,622	10,754
Others	66,537	2,010	21,647	136,196
Total	956,442	496,487	2,523,759	942,879

Source: MSÉ 1942, MTF 1943, MSU 1944

⁵ The majority of the people becoming Hungarian citizens at this time had been Hungarian citizens before the treaty concluding World War I.

This situation, however, did not last very long, as the treaty concluding the Second World War again disregarded the principle of ethnicity and in addition to the restoration of the earlier situation gave further Hungarian-inhabited territories to Czechoslovakia. Due to a lack of contemporary statistical figures the exact number of military or civilian victims of World War II, of those leaving the country when the war ended, or of those fleeing from neighboring countries to Hungary cannot be established. For example, one source estimates the number of Hungarian troops capitulating to the American forces at 120,000–280,000, whereas another mentions 800,000 (Kisbarkani 1969). The forced migration we have outlined had just ended when the victorious powers after World War II decided to relocate a significant part of the ethnic German population of Hungary, or about 250,000 people, to Germany. Then, within the framework of a Hungarian-Czechoslovak population exchange, about 90,000 ethnic Slovaks left the country, while approximately 115,000–120,000 Hungarians had to leave their homeland, which now belonged to Czechoslovakia. At the same time nearly 130,000 people from Rumania and 70,000 people each from Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union arrived in Hungary. The loss of people in the war, the large-scale forced migration, and the number of refugees can be demonstrated by a comparison of census figures: for the same geographic area, the census in 1949 was more than a 100,000 less than in 1941.

In the contemporary history of Hungary, from the standpoint of international migration there was no other period like the one between 1947 and the outbreak of the revolution in 1956. After World War II, all spontaneous or uncontrollable processes, such as immigration and emigration, were considered alien to the system in the Soviet bloc and therefore were drastically curtailed. Under this ideological and political determination, travel abroad was severely restricted for the citizens of the communist countries from the time of the communist takeover (the late 1940s) on, as was emigration for foreign citizens. Anyone who illegally crossed the well-guarded borders jeopardized his life; anyone who failed to return from a trip abroad could expect retaliation against his family members. In compliance with the peace treaty that followed World War I, ties were broken during these years with the more than three million Hungarians living in areas now belonging to neighboring countries. To prevent illegal emigration, the western and southern borders of Hungary were rigorously guarded, and the other borders were made impossible to cross with help from the border guards of the so-called friendly neighboring countries. This is clearly indicated by the available figures, since 2,553 people left the country during these years and only 476 of them returned (Table 4). These numbers are so small that they do not constitute an influence on the size of the population. We can assume that the lack of migration also contributed to the increase of 756,000 people in the 1960 census compared to the one from 1949.⁶ This migration “standstill” that started in 1947 came to an explosive end

⁶ If we take into consideration those who fled in 1956 and 1957, this number exceeded 900,000.

in 1956, when nearly 200,000 people left the country. This explosion of migration restored “order“ to the system, and from this time onward emigration and immigration must be considered factors in positive or negative population change, even if the annual number of emigrants/immigrants did not become really significant before 1988.⁷ Thus, international migration did not significantly affect the total population before 1956; instead, the post-war situation and the strict ban on abortions in the 1950s were primarily responsible for population change. In spite of all this, a potential drop in population could be foreseen as early as 1958, when the net reproduction rate fell below 1 (in 1958, for example, it was 0.973). In the development of this situation, we cannot disregard the significant and far-reaching impact of the unconditional lifting of the ban on abortions in 1956, or the exodus in the same year and subsequent reappearance of the communist nomenclatura after the fall of the revolution.

The real situation (that is, the unevenness of the population development) was masked by the fact that the population actually grew by nearly 750,000 people between 1960 and 1980. A contributing factor was that the absence of all those who left the country either legally or illegally after 1956 was partly counterbalanced by immigration. Thus, although the balance of migration did not actually become positive until 1988, it was the immigrants of the almost 40 preceding years who had helped to keep the rate of population decrease from becoming more rapid. The vast majority of the people who had the opportunity to settle in the country after 1956 were ethnic Hungarians from the neighboring states. This proceeded from the formal restoration of the earlier “rule“ by which Hungarian ethnics left outside the Trianon borders could again move to Hungary, though only in small numbers and primarily for the purpose of family reunification.

The emigration process that has been going on since 1956, like every migration process, has both direct and indirect impacts. The direct impact is the shrinking of the population, which is caused by the absence of those who have emigrated. The indirect or delayed impact, the one with ramifications for the future, relates to the productivity of the emigrants, because their offspring also contribute a negative number to the statistics. If we consider the Hungarian situation, we have to notice that the immigrants have a higher age structure than emigrants; therefore, multiplication in the case of emigrants is much more significant. In other words, if the emigrants had stayed in their country, the decrease in number would have occurred at least 15 years later in their subpopulation: i.e., instead of 1981, it would only have happened after 1995 (Illés and Habcicsek 1977).

⁷ Despite the closed nature of the bolshevik system, under the principle of international solidarity and the internationalism of the proletariat before 1956 a small number of Greeks, and after the 1960s, African, Central and South American political refugees (communists) arrived in the country.

Table 4. International migration between 1947 and 1989 in relation to Hungary.

Year	Emigrants			Immigrants			Natu- ralization, Denatu- ralization	Release	Depri- vation	Migration difference
	Legal	Illegal	Together	Return home	Immigrant	Together				
1947	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-8
1948	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-6
1949	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	386	-386
1950	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	481	-481
1951	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	504	-504
1952	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33	-33
1953	135	-	135	-	-	-	-	-	33	-168
1954	1,099	-	1,099	-	-	-	-	-	-	-1,099
1955	1,319	-	1,319	476	-	476	-	-	-	-843
1956	2,795	193,835 ^{**}	196,630	551	-	551	-	-	-	-196,079
1957	8,580	-	8,580	13,535	-	13,535	-	-	5	4,950
1958	1,637	-	1,637	482	-	482	524	193	-	-824
1959	1,911	-	1,911	740	-	740	488	183	-	-866
1960	1,742	-	1,742	2,236	23,770 ^{***}	26,006	528	380	1	24,411
1961	1,405	-	1,405	2,080	-	2,080	697	481	-	891
1962	2,633	-	2,633	771	-	771	586	1,110	2	-2,388
1963	2,344	687	3,031	1,085	1,130	2,215	1,164	904	-	-556
1964	2,663	2,392	5,055	1,054	1,256	2,310	805	515	-	-2,455
1965	1,848	3,393	5,241	655	792	1,447	658	448	20	-3,604
1966	1,865	2,188	4,053	502	674	1,176	738	798	3	-2,940
1967	2,116	1,617	3,733	-	617	617	560	578	10	-3,144
1968	1,928	2,236	4,164	-	644	644	472	471	-	-3,519
1969	1,954	3,068	5,022	326	583	909	375	522	4	-4,264
1970	2,369	3,718	6,087	591	767	1,358	416	739	4	-5,056
1971	2,020	3,517	5,537	543	839	1,382	461	870	-	-4,564
1972	2,240	3,364	5,604	312	979	1,291	745	2,071	-	-5,639
1973	2,335	2,891	5,226	605	1,588	2,193	427	1,328	-	-3,934
1974	2,312	2,176	4,488	589	1,508	2,097	399	1,249	7	-3,248
1975	2,456	1,541	3,997	827	1,572	2,399	425	1,280	1	-2,454
1976	2,259	1,660	3,919	800	1,687	2,487	453	1,194	3	-2,176
1977	2,229	1,858	4,087	629	2,001	2,630	548	1,214	-	-2,123
1978	1,987	1,805	3,792	735	1,994	2,729	546	1,181	-	-1,698
1979	1,788	2,614	4,402	773	1,958	2,731	598	1,280	1	-2,354
1980	1,898	4,657	6,555	680	1,912	2,592	589	1,325	2	-4,701
1981	1,839	4,108	5,947	746	1,487	2,233	1,176	1,086	-	-3,624
1982	1,637	2,676	4,313	865	1,326	2,191	1,641	1,027	-	-1,508
1983	1,490	2,239	3,729	987	1,880	2,867	1,173	1,462	-	-1,151
1984	1,349	2,136	3,485	1,029	318	1,347	783	1,446	-	-2,801
1985	1,303	2,584	3,887	945	112	1,057	850	842	-	-2,822
1986	1,282	3,295	4,577	907	147	1,054	948	1,236	-	-3,811
1987	1,476	4,923	6,399	916	1,239	2,155	1,012	1,510	-	-4,742
1988	1,358	3,506	4,864	515	12,273	12,788	893	1,358	-	7,459
1989	1,299	142	1,441	901	23,493	24,394	1,083	1,368	-	22,668
Total	74,900	264,826	339,726	39,388	88,546	127,934	22,761	31,649	1 514 ^{****}	-222,194

^{**} Together 1956 and 1957.

^{***} Living abroad before January 1, 1947, according to the census (January 1, 1960).

^{****} In the case of 414, the decision unknown.

Source: Tóth 1997, 65.

Between 1947 and the early 1990s, more than 380,000 people left the country. (After 1990 there are no statistics on Hungarian emigrants, except for those who declared their intention to settle elsewhere.) The number of immigrants was as much as 100,000 lower. Since these are the only numbers available, we cannot define the sex and age constituents of the emigrant group; therefore, we cannot estimate the exact nature of the loss and its effect on the aging of the whole nation.

We can assume that in the years after 1990 the age constituent of the immigrant group became lower than it was before, though we can still say for the whole period that not only was the volume of emigration more significant than that of immigration, the age constituent of the group was also lower. In this way, the movement of emigrants reduced the size of the population and also played a major role in the aging of the nation.

With the disruption of the Soviet Union, the division that was typical after 1947 between the western and eastern world disappeared. The change in Hungary was experienced as early as 1988, when the authorities granted residency permits to 12,273 persons. After the end of 1999, Hungarian citizens were free to travel abroad, and foreigners were allowed to enter Hungary if they met certain requirements. An important element in the process of change was that the official attitude towards Hungarian citizens living in the neighboring countries was fundamentally altered. As a consequence of all these facts and of the geographical position of the country, Hungary soon became the target or the receiving country in the international movement of migration. Since (all) restrictions on travel had been lifted, we are not aware of the exact number of those who left the country after 1990, despite the existence of a government decree requiring all citizens staying abroad for longer than 3 months to report this condition to the Mayor's Office. The decree has not been followed, however, and we only have data on those who gave up their Hungarian citizenship.

As shown in Table 4, the annual number of legal and illegal emigrants from 1960 to 1989 was between 1,405 and 6,555. Presumably, the same number of people left the country or stayed abroad for a longer period of time after 1990 as before. Not counting those who gave up their Hungarian citizenship, after 1990 the annual increase in the number of those who stayed abroad for a longer period must be at least 4,000. Thus during the last decade at least 40,000 Hungarian citizens left the country. If we add to this figure the number of individuals who gave up their citizenship, we might say that during the last decade at least 50,000–60,000 people left the country.

On the other hand, between 1990 and 1997 there were 139,970 immigrants coming from 164 countries and staying for more than one year. Of these, 72.1% (100,917 persons) came from the seven neighboring countries (Table 6); 56.8% (79,527 persons) of the immigrants received official immigrant status, while 90.9% of this number (72,258 persons) were also citizens of the seven neighboring countries. This means

that 71.6% of those who came from the neighboring countries most probably came with the intention of becoming Hungarian citizens.

Table 5. The number of individuals giving up their Hungarian citizenship, 1990–1999.

Year	Number
1990	1,184
1991	436
1992	1,148
1993	2,084
1994	1,688
1995	1,413
1996	1,022
1997	887
1998	850
1999	778
1990–1999	11,490

Table 6. Number of incoming people by status and sex, 1990–1997.

Year	Incoming people (number)						Total
	Immigrants		Others		Together		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1990	11,188	10,995	6,299	4,197	17,487	15,192	32,679
1991	7,763	6,990	4,698	2,743	12,461	97,333	22,194
1992	4,905	5,235	3,061	1,831	7,966	7,066	15,032
1993	4,850	5,340	3,647	2,064	8,497	7,404	15,901
1994	3,525	4,163	4,732	2,834	8,257	6,997	15,254
1995	2,488	3,289	5,896	3,337	8,384	6,626	15,010
1996	2,019	2,816	6,038	3,630	8,057	6,446	14,503
1997	1,650	2,311	3,287	2,149	4,037	4,460	8,497
1990–97	38,388	41,139	37,658	22,785	76,046	63,924	139,970

Among those who came after 1990, the number of men was 8.6% higher than that of women. The surplus in the number of men was caused by the fact that the ratio of men to women among those who stayed in Hungary for longer than a year was 62.3–37.7%. The difference is significant, as there were 24.6% more men in the group. These figures reflect the position of the sexes in the labor market: the vast majority of these people are employees of multinational corporations or other firms with foreign interests (or sometimes their owners), staff members of non-profit organizations, and their family members.

Nevertheless, female immigrants, those who will most probably increase the number of Hungarian citizens in the long run, outnumber the men by 3.4%, which further increases the proportion of women in the whole population. The ratio of immigrants to those staying longer than one year varies from year to year. Whereas among the immigrants, in cases of both women and men, the number of those granted immigrant status has been decreasing each year since 1990, in the case of those staying longer than one year there is a fluctuation tied to the strength of the Hungarian economy and other factors.

Among the foreigners who came to Hungary between 1990 and 1997, 29,681 have left the country. In this case we can see a major difference between those with an immigrant status and those staying longer than one year (Table 7). In eight years under analysis, 1.6 % of those with an immigrant status either returned to their countries or migrated to a third country, while the rest of them, 98.4%, became new Hungarian citizens. However, 47% of those who came with no intention to settle down here have left the country.

Table 7. The number of emigrants by sex and entry status, 1990–1997.

Year	Number of people entering						Total
	Immigrants		Other		Together		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1990	32	31	7,010	3,013	7,042	3,044	10,086
1991	85	68	3,006	1,701	3,086	1,769	4,855
1992	75	56	2,848	1,269	2,923	1,325	4,248
1993	90	66	1,601	867	1,691	933	2,624
1994	95	73	1,409	599	1,504	672	2,176
1995	25	36	1,228	471	1,255	507	1,762
1996	203	177	1,354	652	1,557	829	2,386
1997	84	87	1,001	372	1,085	459	1,544
1990–97	692	594	19,452	8,944	20,143	9,538	29,681
	Percentage						
1990	0.3	0.3	69.5	29.9	69.8	30.2	100.0
1991	1.8	1.4	61.9	35.0	63.6	36.4	100.0
1992	1.8	1.3	67.0	29.9	68.8	31.2	100.0
1993	3.4	2.5	61.0	33.0	64.4	35.6	100.0
1994	4.4	3.4	64.8	27.5	69.1	30.9	100.0
1995	1.4	2.0	69.7	26.7	71.2	28.8	100.0
1996	8.5	7.4	56.7	27.3	65.3	34.7	100.0
1997	5.4	5.6	64.8	24.1	70.3	29.7	100.0
1990–97	2.3	2.0	65.5	30.1	67.9	32.1	100.0

Thus, the number of persons immigrating into Hungary between 1990 and 1997 was 139,970. During the same period, 108,223 persons lost their immigrant status: 76.2% of them (78,552) because they became Hungarian citizens, and 27.4% of them (29,681)

because they left the country. The internal breakdown of the group of all emigrants is noteworthy, because only 0.9% of them originally had immigrant status, whereas 20.3% were in the group that stayed longer than one year. Among emigrants in both categories, the men were in the majority (53.8% and 68.5%). Very few of those with immigrant status ultimately returned to their home countries or left for a third country (a total of 1,282 persons out of 79,257). Based on their original citizenship, those who left the country represented 41 countries.

Let us have a closer look at those who became new Hungarian citizens between 1990 and 1997 (Table 8). In 1998 the number of nationalized and re-nationalized individuals was 6,203, while in 1999 it was 6,066, but as we do not know their distribution by age and sex we have not included them in the chart. If we include these figures, then between January 1, 1990 and January 1, 2000 a total of 90,821 immigrants from 119 countries were granted Hungarian citizenship. The variety in the countries of origin shows that we are an attractive country for those who want to change their citizenship. However, if we consider that between 1990 and 1997 (but also during the following years) 88.2% of those who were given Hungarian citizenship (69,253 people) had been citizens in one or another of the neighboring countries, the situation seems quite different. (The predominance of ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries can be observed not only in the case of new citizens, but also in the research conducted so far on all immigrants.)

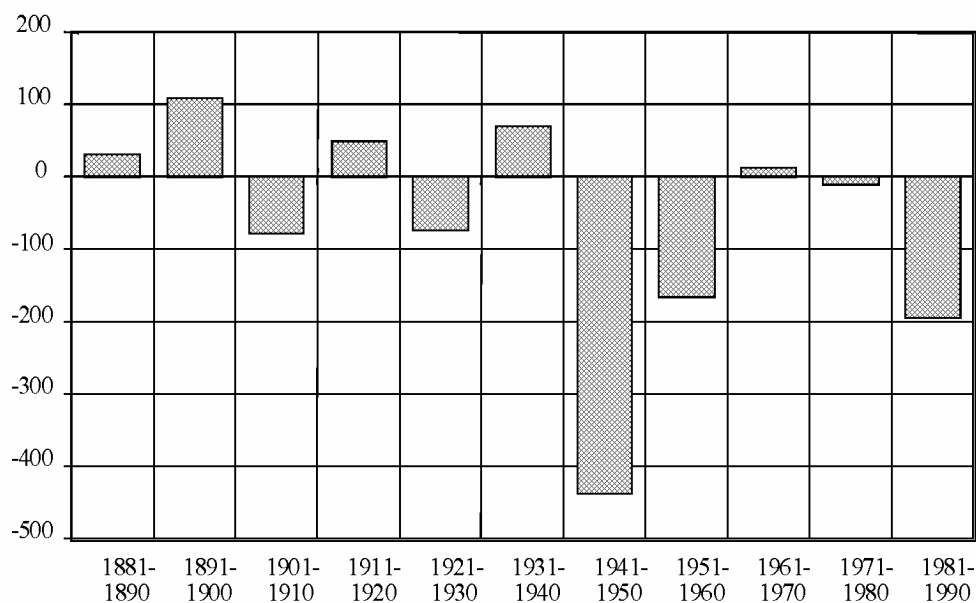
Table 8. Immigrants granted Hungarian citizenship, 1990–1997, by age and sex.

Age	Male		Female		Both sexes	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0–4	346	0.9	367	0.9	749	0.1
5–9	1,493	4.1	1,315	3.1	2,808	3.6
10–14	2,082	5.7	2,046	4.9	4,127	5.3
15–19	2,530	6.9	2,488	5.9	5,018	6.4
20–24	2,590	7.1	2,415	5.8	5,005	6.4
25–29	4,487	12.3	5,018	12.0	9,509	12.1
30–34	4,121	11.3	4,668	11.1	8,789	11.2
35–39	3,867	10.6	4,777	11.4	8,644	11.0
40–44	3,988	10.9	5,329	12.7	9,517	12.1
45–49	3,302	9.0	4,323	10.3	7,725	9.8
50–54	2,605	7.1	2,986	7.1	5,591	7.1
55–59	1,698	4.6	1,849	4.4	3,547	4.6
60–64	1,015	2.8	1,302	3.1	2,317	2.9
65–69	696	1.9	984	2.3	1,680	2.1
65–70	538	1.5	813	1.9	1,351	1.7
75–79	382	1.0	555	1.3	937	1.2
80–84	230	0.6	289	0.7	519	0.7
85–89	181	0.5	208	0.5	389	0.5
90–94	79	0.2	146	0.3	225	0.3
95–	332	0.9	83	0.2	115	0.1
Total	36,592	100.0	41,960	100.0	78,552	100.0

Among those who were granted Hungarian citizenship between 1990 and 1997, 53.4% were women, so the proportion of women in this group is 7% higher than among immigrants as a whole (women make up 45.7% of all immigrants in this period). Among the new citizens, 15.4% are less than 19 years of age, 74.3% are between 20 and 59, and 9.5% are above 59. We have no information on the number of families or the number of families with children, but in this case we consider the number of new citizens under age 19 significant (12,707 persons). The specific nature of the Hungarian situation is even clearer if we consider that, regardless of the country in which they live, most applicants for Hungarian citizenship have Hungarian roots or family ties to the country. This is demonstrated by the composition of the group of new citizens: apart from former Hungarian citizens who have been re-naturalized, who annually represent 15–20% of the group, the overwhelming majority among new citizens (70–80% annually) are of Hungarian ancestry. A further 5–7% have family ties to Hungarian citizens. The proportion of those not belonging to any of the above categories is a mere 1%. Let us add, that almost 50% of these naturalized and re-naturalized citizens come from one country, Rumania.

As a summary of the outlined trends, let us have a brief look at the fluctuations in the Hungarian population between 1881 and 1991 with regard to the migration differences.⁸

Figure 1. Migration differences between national censuses from 1881 to 1990 (Hablicsek-Tóth 1996).



⁸ If we consider the figures that were not publicized during the decades instead of the census totals, the migration loss between 1961–1970 was 27,035 and between 1971–1980 it was 32,891.

Besides the fluctuating migration differences in the past 110 years, we must point out that there have also been significant migration losses. In spite of the emigration boom at the beginning of the century, growth in migration was only perceivable between 1881 and 1900. Apart from this, as mentioned before, the migration balance was positive in the periods 1911–1920 and 1931–1940. The population growth during two periods was not caused by natural migration, however, but by the consequences of the Peace Treaties that concluded the First and Second World Wars: these were the times when a part of the population of ceded territories flooded to the other side of the new border – mostly by force. After 1921, as a result of the dramatic reduction in migration opportunities, the volume of emigration became moderate; the periods after 1940 saw losses. The volume of emigration was exceptionally high after World War II, after the Revolution in 1956, and during the decades before the changing of the political system.

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