

EMESE VITA

THIS IS HOW WE LIVE:  
FACTS AND OPINIONS ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS  
AND MARRIAGE

*“Today, we turn to one person to provide what an entire village once did: a sense of grounding, meaning, and continuity. At the same time, we expect our committed relationships to be romantic as well as emotionally and sexually fulfilling.”*

Esther Perel

**Abstract:** In this study, we had two main objectives in mind. On the one hand, we wanted to give a more general picture of the situation of Hungarians abroad, the connections between relationships and childbearing. On the other hand, in addition to factual issues, we considered it important to examine attitudes and opinions about partnerships, marriage, and childbearing in order to get closer to understanding how partnerships work. For the analysis, we used the data of an extensive survey research conducted in 2018, as a result of which we worked with 2585 valid cases. The target population of the research was the population aged 18–49 of the four major regions across the border, Transylvania, South Slovakia, Vojvodina and Subcarpathia. In the analysis, we pointed out that although the proportion of married people among young adults is relatively low, marriage is the dominant form of relationships in the middle-aged adult population and at the same time, the most common environment for childbearing. The results, with some regional differences, suggest that marriage and family formation are largely postponed to the period after 30 years of age. Signs of the pluralization of partnership and family forms (cohabitation, single-parent families) are most spectacular in South Slovakia, and Subcarpathia is the most traditional in terms of family formation practices. At the level of opinions, the ideas of marriage and the two-parent family model are very important, according to both married and cohabiting people. In addition to the high degree of complexity of the respondents’ ideal marriage image, the dimensions of good marriage ideas also outlined an affective dimension and a cultural homogeneity dimension. In addition to the high degree of relationship satisfaction, however, we found that the gender of the respondents and the status of young children are two important differentiating factors in assessing the satisfaction of a partnership.

## Background

From a historical perspective, the need to experience individual emotions, love, and romance within the framework of marriage is not an old phenomenon. Rather, it appeared with modernity in most of the Western world. Prior to that, marriage was much less of an environment of intimate bonding between partners or even a source of happiness, but was more of a partnership or economic alliance between families that ensured survival. This did not exclude the possibility of a romantic relationship between spouses, but emotional attachment was not an expectation of the parties involved. In comparison, today intimacy between partners is one of the most important foundations for the establishment and survival of partnerships and modern marriages. While the coercive power of institutional factors<sup>1</sup> driving marriage-based relationships has weakened, individual expectations in line with the post-materialist approach to values has strengthened. This is reflected in the possibility of self-realization and personal development, individual happiness, romantic emotions, or a satisfying sex life for both parties. Based on studies on the formation of partnerships, it seems that today, the focus of the qualities of marriages is placed elsewhere (i.e., on an emotional-intimate basis), and with this shift in focus, partnerships have become much more fragile and unstable. In order to understand the mechanisms through which partnerships and marriages work, it is necessary to know the opinions and attitudes that shape individuals' relationship behaviors.

In this study, therefore, we discuss the partnership status and the current, related trend of childbearing, as well as the attitudes towards marriage and childbearing. In a regional comparison, we examine the relation between the partnership status and the idea of childbearing, the concepts formed about an *ideal* marriage, and the satisfaction of the relationship between partners in the context of quality of life. Our study is primarily descriptive, with the aim of providing an overview of the changes that appear in partnerships based on the literature and empirical research, and to summarize in a transparent manner the main family sociological processes and the opinions about partnership and family formation in the four regions where Hungarian minority communities exist for historical reasons. The secondary aim of the study is to provide an incentive for comparative family sociological research in the regions, especially for research and analysis on the quality of partnerships.

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1 The importance of economic, community (family and friendships), and religious control in the formation of relationships has been significantly reduced in the modern world.

*Pathways from institutionalized relationships toward individualization*

The changing trends in partnerships, especially those related to marriage, are fundamentally divided into two types of expert groups. Some researchers have tried to interpret the decades-long trend in marital decline<sup>2</sup> and, at the same time, the growth of cohabitation and divorce in conjunction with the scenario of marital decline. In this regard, the growing willingness to marry in Europe from 2010 onwards has been a turning point.<sup>3</sup> Opinions about marital decline highlight the intensification of individualization and the emphasis on individual interests, as the main factors behind the declining marital mood and marital instability. These mechanisms work against the concept of mostly long-term marriage, which involves sustained commitment and responsibility. Another group of experts, those arguing for the resilience of marriages, points out that while there have been unsuccessful marriages and cohabitation in the past, they have appeared in a less visible way in society. As such, non-functioning marriages remained unknown in the past, due to the stigma attached to divorce.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, since divorce not only involved significant financial sacrifices and in some cases threatened one's livelihood, but as it also attracted contempt from society, people would apply for divorce only in very serious circumstances. In some cases, even extreme solutions have been used to resolve tensions within the family, including those related to traditional gender roles, as shown from research on arsenic poisoning in Tiszazug, Hungary.<sup>5</sup> The increase in control over marriage decisions and the broadening of individual decision-making opportunities are significantly related to the fact that women have gained access to paid employment and thus to the possibility of establishing financial independence.

The need to systematically identify and describe changes in living arrangements led to the establishment of a number of marriage and relationship typologies. Within the framework of this paper, we outline below some of the theoretical and empirical marriage models and relationship typologies considered to be decisive for our analysis. We focus on the characteristics that can determine the ideas and concepts about marriage and relationships, as well as what can influence relationship satisfaction and the assessment of the relationship quality.

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- 2 David Popenoe, "American Family Decline, 1960-1990: A Review and Appraisal" *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 55, no. 3 (1993): 527–542.; Mária, Kopp and Árpád Skrabski, *A támogató család, mint a pozitív életminőség alapja*, ed. Mária Kopp and Mónika Kovács, (Budapest: Semmelweis Kiadó, 2006), 220–232.
  - 3 Balázs Kapitány and Livia Murinkó, *Párkapcsolati változások, termékenységi trendek*, ed. Tamás Kolosi, Iván Szelényi and István György Tóth (Budapest: TÁRKI, 2020), 146–170.
  - 4 Paul R. Amato, "Tensions Between Institutional and Individual Views of Marriage". *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, (2004): 959–965.
  - 5 Béla Bodó, "The Poisoning Women of Tiszazug". *Journal of Family History*, 2002. 27 (1): 40–59.

In the concept of Burgess's marriage typologies<sup>6</sup>, "companionate marriage" is an alternative to "institutional marriage." While the latter is regulated primarily by parents, religious and community expectations, traditions, and patriarchal order and was held together by social obligation, the former is more connected to love, friendship (i.e., being each other's companions), and individual interests and preferences. Burgess saw companionate marriages as less patriarchal and more equality seeking, in which self-expression and personal development were prominent<sup>7</sup>. Thus, expectations about the quality of a relationship began to increasingly become a marriage ideal with the spread of the companionate marriage model. In this type of marriage, satisfaction with marriage depends largely on the parties' performing their marital roles well (i.e., by properly providing care and performing familial responsibilities, as good housewives and responsible parents<sup>8</sup>). In the Western world, the sexual revolution that began in the 1960s resulted in the emergence of new expectations for marriages and further changes to the meaning of marriage. Cherlin<sup>9</sup> grasped all this with the concept of "individualized marriage." Cherlin's concept differs from Burgess's companionate marriage insofar as in the former, individual development and the expression of emotions take precedence over the satisfaction of family formation and marital and parenting roles. According to Giddens,<sup>10</sup> in connection with the deinstitutionalization processes occurring in late modernity, traditional identity-forming factors (e.g., class, religion) lose their significance, and as a result one's intimate relationships become central to self-identity. Through the perspective of late modernity, a relationship lasts as long as the members of the couple are satisfied with the benefits of intimacy and love from the partnership; Giddens refers to such a relationship as a "pure relationship," which derives its legitimacy from itself<sup>11</sup>. The most important features of these practically "floating" relationships are that 1) they are not connected to social institutions, 2) they have no economic relevance, 3) they are not fundamentally based upon a desire to have children, and 4) they are neither legally regulated nor registered; therefore, partners do not have any special, legal rights.

6 Quoted Amato, "Tensions Between Institutional and Individual Views of Marriage," 961.

7 Amato, "Tensions Between Institutional and Individual Views of Marriage", 961.

8 Andrew J. Cherlin, "The deinstitutionalization of American marriage" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66, (2004): 848–864.

9 Cherlin, "The deinstitutionalization of American marriage", 852.

10 Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992)

11 Ágoston Fáber, following the thoughts of Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, expresses his views on the transformation of partnership forms in his extensive theoretical writing. He claims that the "durability-oriented teleological marriage," embodying the ideal type of premodern marriage, is replaced by "happiness-oriented autotelic partnership." Ágoston Fáber, "Autotelic partnership and childbearing as a "metaproject" *Replica*, 110 (2019): 95–133.

Louis Roussel's four-part typology<sup>12</sup> developed in the 1980s was used by Camarero to describe the ideal types of European marriages and long-term coupling along marriage-related values and attitudes, based on empirical data<sup>13</sup>. Considering the nature of the conjugal relationship and the functionality (or lack of) attributed to the relationship, Camarero identified six ideal types of marriage in European countries in the first decade of the 21st century and found there is no single dominant type. Based on the prevalence of each type, it appears that two forms of alliance-type marriages, namely (1) necessary-alliance and (2) contingent-alliance, are the most common. The former carries the characteristics of traditional, institutional marriages in that it is associated with the ideas that marriage is inseparable and that marriage also serves the fulfillment of a certain material-welfare function. The latter alliance-type marriage aims at achieving happiness, which is identified with sexual loyalty. As such, infidelity is considered to be the only "legitimate" reason for divorce in such a relationship. In summary, relationships have undergone significant changes in many respects, including in form and quality and in terms of partners' expectations. The marriage models identified in the literature draw attention to the fact that in society there are many different coupling forms or marriages, including ideal types of marriages or partnerships that are not necessary based upon an institutional framework. The economic, social, and cultural changes of recent decades have not only had a positive effect on the pluralization of partnerships, but have also contributed to the cultivation of individualism, which has a logical impact on relationship behavior as well as conceptions of partnerships, marriage, and childbearing.

Taking into account these changes and the current sociological processes of relationships, after describing the source of the data, in the first part of our study we focus on the aspects of the partnership status of the examined population and the relationships between forms of partnership and childbearing, using descriptive statistics. In the second part of the study, based on opinions and attitudes, we examine the ideas of the ideal marriage, parental roles, and having children among the Hungarian minority living abroad. We close the analysis part by presenting the issue of satisfaction with one's partnership and marriage, and at the end of the study, we summarize the most important findings.

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12 Roussel identified the following four types of marriage: institutional marriage, alliance-type marriage, fusion-type marriage, and association-type marriage. (For details see Mercedes Camarero, "Marriages in Europe. Ideal types of marriage in the first decade of the twenty-first century" *European Societies*, 16 no.3 (2014): 443–461.)

13 Data from 2008–2010 European Values Study were used in the examination.

## Data

The main source of data used in this study is a survey-based sociological examination organized by the Research Institute for Hungarian Communities Abroad in the four major Hungarian communities in Hungary's neighboring countries (i.e., Romania/Transylvania, Slovakia/Southern Slovakia, Serbia/Vojvodina and Ukraine/Subcarpathia). In the research design development, but especially in compiling the questionnaire pillar in line with the concept of the international Generations & Gender Programme<sup>14</sup>, we aimed to explore the main characteristics of demographic behavior and family formation practices in recent years, in order that the data could be compared with previous research results and allow for comparisons by region. Hungarians living abroad were last asked similar questions in 2005, but the data collection only covered the Transylvanian region<sup>15</sup>.

Our research targeted active Hungarian populations and focused on their demographic behavior, various elements of the target group's partner preferences and family practices, and their attitudes towards family formation. During the survey conducted in the summer of 2018, we interviewed 1,300 people in Transylvania, 500 in Southern Slovakia, 400 in Subcarpathia, and 400 in Vojvodina with a paper-based questionnaire following a uniform methodology. In this analysis, our sample contained 2,585 individuals aged 18–49 years, and the sample is representative for gender and age.

## Results

### *Some of the more important features of partnerships and marriages*

In the European context, the most significant changes in partnership formation have been a decline in marriages over many decades, followed by an increase in marriages from 2010, and the increase of the mean age of first marriage<sup>16</sup>. In several Eastern European countries, until the end of their socialist regimes, populations' marriage practices could be characterized by two main factors according to John Hajnal's<sup>17</sup> marriage model: high marriage

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14 For details see: [www.ggp-i.org/about/](http://www.ggp-i.org/about/).

15 Zsolt Spéder, ed., *Párhuzamok. Anyaországi és erdélyi magyarok a századfordulón*. (Budapest: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, Népeségstudományi Kutatóintézet, 2009)

16 Livia Murinkó, Adél Rohr, *Partnerships and marriage*, ed. Judit Monostori, Péter Öri and Zsolt Spéder, (Budapest: Hungarian Demographic Research Institute, 2020), 9–29.

17 John Hajnal, *European Marriage Patterns in Perspective*, ed. D.V. Eversley and D.E.C. Glass, (New Brunswick: Transactions Publishers, 1965), 101–147.

propensity and low marriage age. Analyses by Tamás Kiss<sup>18</sup> and Branislav Šprocha<sup>19</sup> reveal that in Romania and Slovakia, where marriage was considered almost universal and people married at a young age, postponing behaviors in the willingness to marry began to prevail after 1990. Marriage remains the most common partnership form in Romania, and the data of the latest census (2011) supports the fact that while in Western Europe and in Hungary there are increasingly more cohabiting partnerships, among Hungarians in Transylvania cohabitation has not become an alternative to marriage. Conversely, Šprocha's study<sup>20</sup> identifies that, among young Hungarian women in Slovakia, a very small proportion of young women live in a partnership and that cohabitation is very common.

Based on our analysis, we can draw relatively similar conclusions regarding the partnership behavior and the timing of marriages of the minority Hungarians abroad. A significant proportion of young adults do not marry before the age of 29, but the majority marries after they reach the age of 30. In the 18–29 age group, the proportion of single people ranges from 65% to 86%, while the share of single individuals is highest in Southern Slovakia and Vojvodina, both at 86%, with Transylvania and Subcarpathia at 79% and 65%, respectively. In the 30–49 age group, the majority of the adult population is married in Transylvania and Subcarpathia. The highest willingness to marry is observed in Subcarpathia, where marriage is almost universal in the older age group, and the proportion of single people aged 30–49 is the lowest compared to other regions (Figure 1). The proportion of single people over the age of 30 in Southern Slovakia, Transylvania, and Vojvodina is noteworthy, which may indicate both a postponement of marriages as well as the spread of unmarried cohabitation. This is discussed in greater detail below.

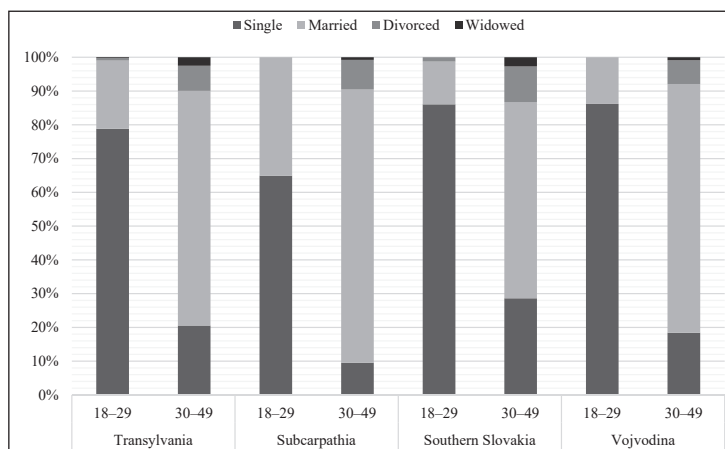


Figure 1. Distribution of official marital status by age groups by region, 2018

18 Tamás Kiss, “A reprodukív magatartás etnikai különbségei Erdélyben”. *Kisebbségi Szemle*, 4, no. 4 (2019): 51–75.

19 Branislav Šprocha, “Ethnic Differences in Family Formation and Patterns of Exogamy in Slovakia”. *Hungarian Journal of Minority Studies*, 3, (2020): 59–104.

20 Šprocha, “Ethnic Differences in Family Formation and Patterns of Exogamy in Slovakia,” 59–104.

In the case of women from the four regions, the increase in the average age of first marriage is the greatest in Southern Slovakia, with slight increases observed in Transylvania and Subcarpathia (Figure 2). For those born in the early 1970s, their first marriage took place in their early 20s, with those born the 1980s increasingly having their first marriage in their mid-20s, with some regional differences. The data from Vojvodina and Subcarpathia does not show a significant correlation, which is probably due to the low number of cases broken down by date ranges and should therefore be treated with discretion. At the same time, in line with our previous analysis<sup>21</sup>, we believe that conservative family formation behavior prevails in the frequent and early marriages of Hungarians in Subcarpathia, which is less true in the other regions.

The average age of first marriage for men also increased over the same time periods. The oldest (born in 1969–1973) in Transylvania and in Southern Slovakia married at an average age of 25, and Subcarpathian men at a younger age, 23.8. In contrast, those born between 1984 and 1993 married on average one year later in Southern Slovakia, and they belong to the group of those who became married at a relatively young age, as is suggested by the data on age distributions of marital status (Figure 1).

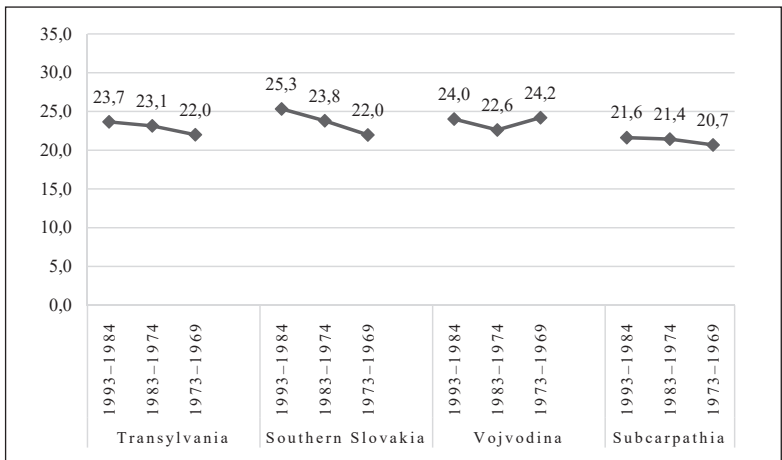


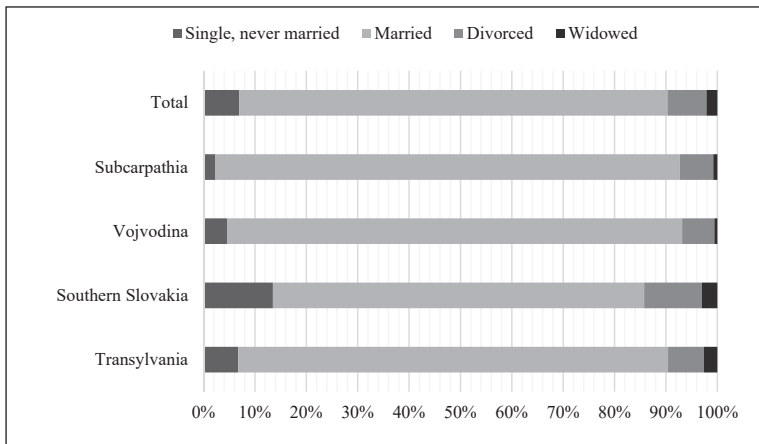
Figure 2. Average age at first marriage of women born between 1973 and 1993 by region (average age), 2018<sup>22</sup>

Age, in addition to relating to marital status, also relates to childbearing, as marital status is an important indicator of one’s desire to have a child. On average, just over 80% of adults raise their children in a marriage. There are also small regional differences in this respect: childbearing is most typically associated with marriage in Subcarpathia, where

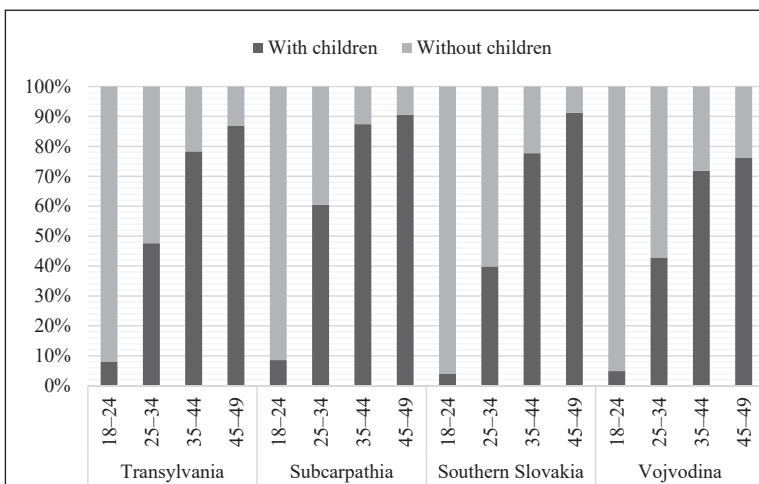
21 Emese Vita, “Youngsters’ Partnership Behaviour in the Carpathian Basin,” *Belvedere Meridionale*, 31, no. 4 (2019): 115–142.  
 22 ANOVA-test\* significance level: Transylvania:  $\leq 0,005$ ; Southern Slovakia:  $\leq 0,009$ ; not significant in case of Vojvodina and Subcarpathia.



90% of adults raising their own children are married and only 2% of children were born out of wedlock. The proportion of single parents raising children is the highest in Southern Slovakia, at 14%. In addition, the proportion of divorces with children is notably highest in this region, at 11%, while in other regions this figure is at most 7% (Figure 3). Moreover, we must add that the youngest age group, in addition to being mostly single, is also childless. Starting a family is typical after the age of 25, and as can be seen, the proportion of those with children in the 25–34 age group ranges between 40–60% by region, with the most in Subcarpathia, followed by Transylvania, and with the least in Southern Slovakia. Above the age of 35, however, childbearing is becoming more common in all regions, although in Southern Slovakia and Vojvodina a significant proportion of those aged 35–44 (22 and 28%, respectively) are childless (Figure 4).



**Figure 3. Distribution of persons with children by marital status by region, 2018**



**Figure 4. Distribution of those with and without children by age groups, by region, 2018**

In order to gain a more complex picture of the functioning of partnerships as well as cohabitation outside of marriage, below we also examine the issues related to the actual partnership situations. Based upon extensive research on the topic of cohabitation in Hungary, we know that in the early 1990s, those living in a cohabiting relationship consisted mainly of divorced and single individuals, and during this period, both (officially) married and widowed people lived in a cohabiting relationship more than in 2001 or even 2011.<sup>23</sup> However, the most striking change in Hungary is that beginning in the 1990s, the proportion of single people living in a cohabiting relationship began to increase significantly. With regard to cohabitation, uniform data on Hungarians living abroad is only available following the survey of the Research Institute for Hungarian Communities Abroad, which reflects the 2018 status data. While conducting interviews, we were primarily interested in what alternative partnership practices are followed by those with officially single statuses.

The largest group of singles in the questionnaire sample are young people who have not yet established a stable relationship, meaning they substantively live alone. Their proportion is significant, above 50%, except in the Southern Slovakia region, where the proportion is slightly less but increasing. Regarding relationships, cohabitating persons (i.e., parties live together permanently without institutionalizing their relationship with marriage) form a more significant group among Hungarians living in Transylvania and Southern Slovakia. In Subcarpathia, this form of relationship is less typical (Figure 5).

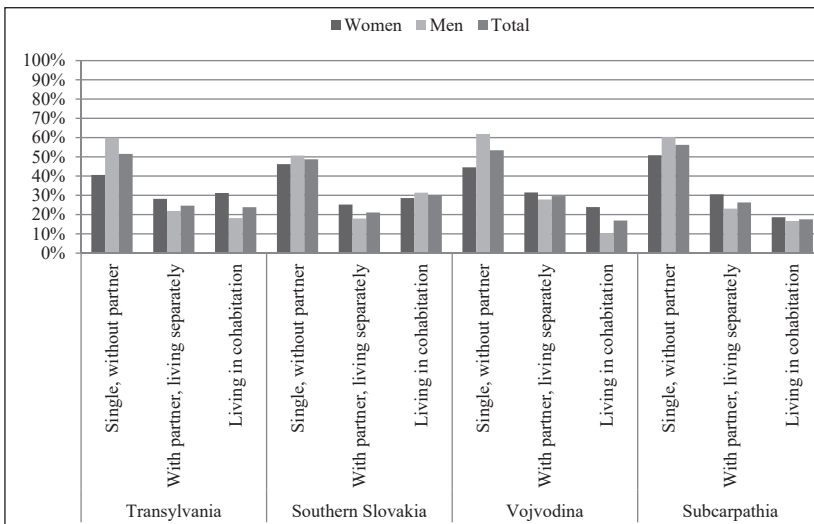


Figure 5. Distribution of 18–49-year-olds by actual marital status by region, 2018

23 Zsolt Spéder and Lívia Murinkó, Marriage and cohabitation., ed. Judit Monostori, Péter Óri and Zsolt Spéder, Zsolt (Budapest: Hungarian Demographic Research Institute, 2015), 9–26.

Among adults, the proportion of cohabitation rates is just over 20% on average, although there is a more significant dispersion between regions in the incidence of cohabitation relationships. Our previous studies focusing on Hungarian young adults living beyond the borders of Hungary show that although the proportion of cohabitants has increased over the past decade, cohabitation tends to function as a precursor to marriage and, in relatively few cases, becomes an alternative form of marriage.<sup>24</sup> This is partly due to the fact that about three quarters of cohabiting relationships in Transylvania, Southern Slovakia, and Vojvodina involve unmarried people, and only to a lesser extent involve divorced and widowed people who were previously married. However, it should also be taken into account that the proportion of single people over the age of 30 in the studied population is relatively low, including those living in a cohabiting relationship<sup>25</sup>.

The majority of cohabitation relationships are relatively young, with a significant portion being less than three years old. At the same time, the proportion of those who have lived with their partner for a longer period of time, up to a decade or more, is not insignificant (Table 1). In connection with studying unmarried cohabitation and childbearing, it is also often pointed out that, at least in Eastern Europe, with the spread of out-of-wedlock births, the fertility of unmarried women remains lower than that of married couples.<sup>26</sup> One sociological explanation for this phenomenon is that in countries where cohabitation is not socially accepted, there is also strong normative resistance to having children out of wedlock.

As we pointed out above, the primary medium of childbearing is within married relationships abroad, and comparatively, childbearing outside of marriage is less frequent. The majority of cohabiting single people are childless, with the exception of those in Southern Slovakia. However, in Southern Slovakia, where cohabitation is more widespread compared to the other regions, we do not see any difference between the childbearing behavior of single people living in a cohabiting community and those of widows and divorcees.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, a smaller proportion of single people in other regions appears to view their cohabitation as an ideal partnership type for having children, just like marriage. In contrast, for those who have previously been married, cohabitation is more of an alternative to marriage; a higher proportion of cohabiting widows and divorcees raise children in a cohabitation partnership than do singles.

24 Emese Vita, "Youngsters' Partnership Behaviour in the Carpathian Basin," 115–142.

25 The situation is different in Subcarpathia, where the rate of unmarried cohabitation is lower and more people choose cohabitation after divorce and widowhood.

26 Valér Veres, *Demográfia és népességszociológia*. (Kolozsvár: Kolozsvári Egyetemi Kiadó – Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2006)

27 It should be added that due to the low number of cases these data should be treated with discretion and limits to some extent the examination of more detailed correlations, for example with regard to the number of children and the type of relationship.

*Table 1. Distribution of people living in a cohabiting relationship according to official marital status, duration of cohabitation, and whether they have a child (N = 280), 2018*

<i>How long have they been living together?</i>	Transylvania		Southern Slovakia		Vojvodina		Subcarpathia	
	single	divorced/widowed	single	divorced/widow	single	divorced/widowed	single	divorced/widow
Less than 1 year	12.0	15.4	7.3	8.3	16.0	0.0	–	–
1–3 years	48.0	30.8	29.1	25.0	48.0	0.0	53.8	44.4
4–6 years	16.0	30.8	18.2	16.7	12.0	20.0	15.4	33.3
7–10 years	12.0	7.7	27.3	33.3	8.0	60.0	15.4	11.1
11 years or longer	12.0	15.4	18.2	16.7	16.0	20.0	15.4	11.1
<i>Total</i>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Do they have children?</i>								
They have children	38.1	88.5	50.0	88.2	24.0	80.0	15.4	80.0
They don't have children	61.9	11.5	50.0	11.8	76.0	20.0	84.6	20.0
<i>Total</i>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

To summarize, our key findings related to couple behavior and family formation are that the postponement of a first marriage is not accompanied by a significant decline in marriages or widespread out-of-wedlock childbearing, however, these trends vary from region to region. In addition, we can observe the pluralization of partnerships, with the remark that the social importance of unmarried cohabitation and single-parent families shows regional differences. Alternative partnership forms, like different types of cohabitation (unmarried cohabitation, post-divorce cohabitation) show the highest rates in the Southern Slovakian region, while the more traditional family formation, such as a marital partnership with children is almost universal in Subcarpathia.

### *Opinions about marriage*

Exploring opinions about marriage is important for understanding how partnerships work. When we asked respondents to rank what they considered most important for a good marriage, it turned out that the most important factors were attributed to loyalty, mutual respect, love/affection, and sacrifice for one another. The factors of a common child(ren) of the relationship, sincere emotions, sexuality financial comfort of the marriage are likewise of above-average importance for a good marriage, according to the study. At the end of the rankings, practical elements are mentioned, such as a balanced division of labor between the partners, and common cultural features, such as similar tastes, the same nationality, and a common religious denomination. Although these factors ranked last, they are quite important based on evaluations when people think about different components of a good marriage (in most cases they received an average score above 3 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest, see Figure 6).



Figure 6. How important are the following aspects for a good marriage? Means by region (1 = not important at all, 5 = very important; N = 2545), 2018

In what follows, we examine the main dimensions with which people associate “good marriage,” and how the dimensions of an ideal marriage are separated based on individuals’ subjective ideals. As a method, we use factor analysis, thereby reducing the number of items listed in Figure 6 to five, and as a result of the analysis, two main factors can be identified.<sup>28</sup> Ideas about good marriage can be divided into two distinct dimensions (see Table 2). The statements belonging to the first dimension emphasize a kind of universal human behavior, the need for morality in relationship behavior, and the importance of romantic emotions. The foundations of a good marriage in this dimension are perhaps outlined along slightly more abstract core values and affectivity than mutual respect, love, affection, and loyalty, the importance of which draws attention to the exclusivity of the relationship between the partners. Those who value the qualities belonging to the second factor attach importance to common cultural features, such as religious denomination and nationality. When interpreting the second dimension, it is important to consider that the respondents’ partnerships, marriage decisions, and related attitudes are formed in an ethnically and religiously mixed environment. Thus, at one end of the scale is the ideal of national and denominational homogeneity, and at the other end are the views of respondents who believe that a common denomination and a common nationality are not important for a well-functioning marriage. The relevant results of the factor analysis support the previous findings<sup>29</sup> that Hungarian minority groups ultimately strive for a kind of “ethnic border control” in order to achieve ethnic endogamy, with different intensity and efficiency.<sup>30</sup> Minority studies research mentions the importance of ethnic border maintenance practices primarily as a factor against ethnically mixed marriages. It is important to see, however, that the idea of cultural homogeneity also appears at the level of ideas and opinions about an ideal marriage in relation to nationality and religious traditions, and it also affects marriage decisions to a varying extent in each region. This is indicated by the analysis and, more broadly, by the results of the research project that in regions (mainly in Southern Slovakia, but also in Vojvodina) where cultural differences are less pronounced, either at the level of discourses or institutional

28 For the factor analysis, we used the 13 items shown in Figure 6 as a starting point, from which, finally choosing the maximum-likelihood method and a varimax rotation, the model retained five items (see Table 2) for the best fit, which were then clustered into two factors. The first factor explains the total variance of 28.7, and the second factor explains 21.0% of it. Goodness-of-Fit Test: Chi-Square=0.350, Sig. 0.554.

29 Emese Vita, ed., *Fontos döntések – párválasztás és családalapítás külhonban*. (Budapest: BGA Zrt., 2020)

30 See detailed: Tamás Kiss, *Asszimiláció és határ-megerősítés. Vegyes házasságok és a vegyes családokon belüli etnikai szocializáció Erdélyben*, ed. Apró István (Médiatudományi Intézet, 2016), 47–88.

structures<sup>31</sup>, ethnic identity and denominational homogamy are less important in the concept of an ideal marriage, and consequently there is also a higher rate of exogamous marriages. It is also worth emphasizing that those who do not attach or hardly attach little importance to the moral, emotional, and culturally homogeneous dimensions that underpin a good marriage do not necessarily reject a marriage based on a different basis, but believe that without affection, respect, loyalty, and emotional support, one cannot live in a good marriage in the absence of common cultural and identity-forming factors.

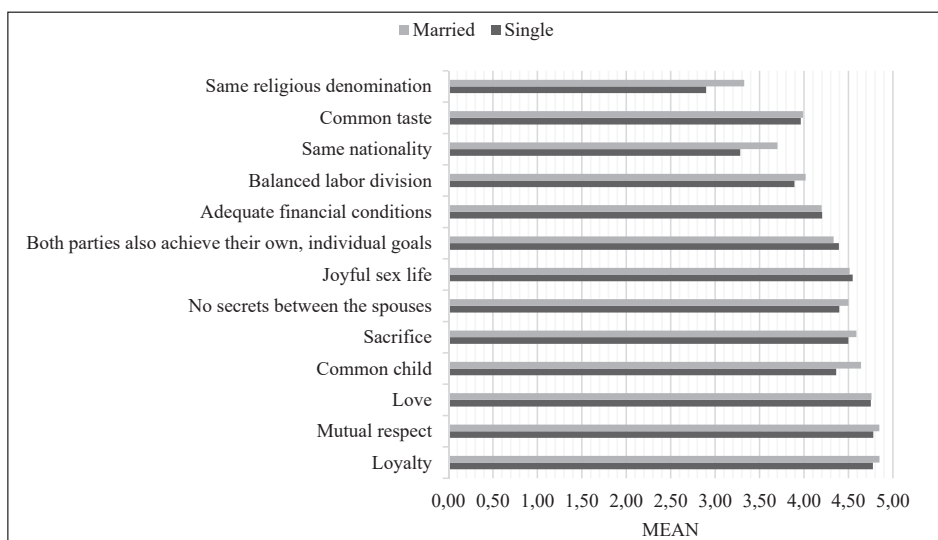
*Table 2. The two main dimensions of good marriage ideals, Factor Analysis (N = 2512), 2018*

		Factor Scores
	Mutual affection and respect	0.754
Affective dimension	Loyalty	0.699
	Love, being in love	0.605
Cultural homogeneity dimension	Same religious denomination	0.829
	Same nationality	0.585

Since individuals may have different views on marriage depending on their life stage, we also considered it worthwhile to analyze whether the image of a good marriage changes as a result of changes in marital status. In general, we can state that married and unmarried people mentioned the same factors in the first three places when they were asked to rank the necessary elements of a good marriage: loyalty, mutual respect, and love were mentioned among the most important factors. It should be added that married people rated these elements a little higher than did single people. There is an even more pronounced difference in rating the importance of having a child together, common nationality, and common religious denomination, with married people again showing stronger preference than single people (Figure 7).

31 Vita, Fontos döntések – párválasztás és családalapítás külhokban.





*Figure 7. How important are the following aspects for a good marriage? Means by marital status (where 1 = not important at all, 5 = very important), 2018*

As seen above, the existence of a common child is one of the important criteria of a good marriage, and the role of children in the lives of single people also represents a very important value of Hungarians abroad. The vast majority of the public believes that the lives of both men and women can only be fulfilled if they have a child. At the same time, these opinions reflect the norms and expectations of society in certain areas of life, such as having children. There also seems to be greater expectations for women in this area, because more people think that women can only be fulfilled by being mothers than think that men can only be fulfilled by being fathers. This is indicated by the fact that while 63% of people fully agree that a woman's life can only be complete with children, only 56% think similarly about men. Opinions are more dispersed by region: 81% of Subcarpathian respondents believe that women can only be fulfilled as mothers, and 75% believe that men can be only fulfilled as fathers. In comparison, a smaller although clearly significant part of the respondents from Transylvania, Vojvodina, and Southern Slovakia associate a person's fulfilment with having a child (Table 3). Opinions are even more aligned when it comes to determining that children need both parents to grow up happily; nearly 80% of the total sample fully identify with this statement, with very small differences between regions. It is worth noting that those who disagree with the statement, represent a small portion of around 5% in both Southern Slovakia and Vojvodina, and reflect this view in terms of co-existence forms and practices. If we recall, the proportion of divorced single people is also more common among the respondents in Southern Slovakia, but overall, more middle-aged people live there as single people or without children than in Subcarpathia or Transylvania.

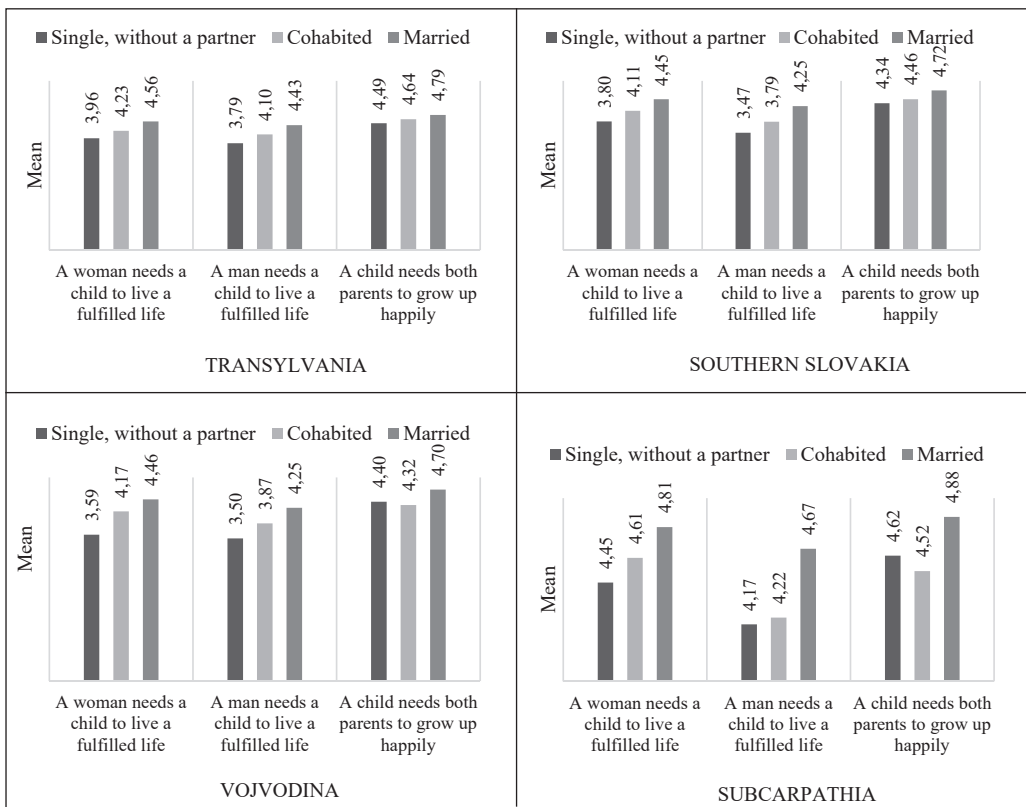
*Table 3. Distribution of opinions on the roles of women and men by region (%), 2018*

	Totally disagrees	Partially disagrees	Neither agree nor disagree	Rather agrees	Totally agrees
<i>A woman needs children to fulfil her life.</i>					
Transylvania	3.4	3.0	11.4	20.4	61.9
Southern Slovakia	5.0	3.8	16.2	20.8	54.2
Vojvodina	8.8	5.6	9.4	18.5	57.6
Subcarpathia	1.5	0.5	4.3	12.4	81.3
Total	4.2	3.1	10.9	18.9	62.9
<i>A man needs children to fulfil his life.</i>					
Transylvania	4.1	3.5	13.5	21.3	57.5
Southern Slovakia	6.9	6.7	21.5	22.1	42.8
Vojvodina	9.9	7.5	13.6	18.2	50.8
Subcarpathia	2.8	2.0	7.1	13.5	74.5
Total	5.3	4.5	14.1	19.8	56.4
<i>A child needs both parents to grow up happily.</i>					
Transylvania	0.9	0.8	4.7	12.8	80.7
Southern Slovakia	1.9	2.5	9.7	12.4	73.6
Vojvodina	1.9	2.5	9.7	12.4	73.6
Subcarpathia	0.3	0.8	4.8	7.5	86.7
Total	2.9	3.2	7.4	8.2	78.4

Below, we look at opinions about the parental roles of women and men along the differences in marital status. We can clearly observe that the maternal and paternal fulfillment of women and men are most significant in the lives of married couples, followed by those living in a cohabiting relationship, and finally by single people. From this, we can also conclude that in the pre-marital life stage, individuals are less preoccupied with parenting role

expectations, which begin to become stronger as individuals' life situations move closer to the "ideal" situation of childbirth/parenthood.

A regional comparison shows that respondents in Subcarpathia, including married people, highly value the role of both women and men as parents, but compared to the other regions, singles in Subcarpathia also agree above average that a woman or man's life can only be complete if they have children. This also suggests that childbearing plays a central role in starting a family in terms of assessing the quality of life of Hungarians in Subcarpathia. It is also characteristic of all regions that the fulfillment of men in their parental role is generally underestimated or, in other words, is less expected, regardless of relationship status. The trend, however, is the same as for motherhood: married people to the greatest extent, those in a cohabiting partnership to a lesser extent, and single people to the least extent believe that men need to become fathers in order to be fulfilled. These results show that in the four regions discussed, married and cohabiting people consider parenting and childbearing and the ideal of a two-parent family to be extremely important, which is also important for single people, suggesting a close relationship between childbearing and the form of the relationship (Figures 8–11).



Figures 8–11. Opinions on the roles of women and men by marital status, by region (averages; 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), 2018

*Partnership satisfaction, as a component of well-being*

In a multidimensional approach to quality of life, studies distinguish between three main dimensions: the physical or somatic, the psychic, and the social.<sup>32</sup> In the last part of our study, we examine the intersection of the components of the psychic and social dimensions, the relationship between satisfaction (i.e., partnership satisfaction), and the form of partnership. Erát<sup>33</sup>, who analyzes the factors and time evolution of relationship satisfaction, describes different satisfaction trajectories in women and men: a high satisfaction group can be observed for both sexes, and a low trajectory can be identified for women and a moderate trajectory for men. According to Erát's study, women and men's satisfaction are affected by different factors. For example, women are more likely to have a low satisfaction trajectory if they live in a cohabiting relationship, if they were not constructive about conflict management, if their financial circumstances were unfavorable, or if they were the primary financial providers. The research found that the number of children had by a women had a positive effect on her satisfaction, as did their relatively lower status compared to their partner. The difference between the factors influencing men and women's satisfaction is that while the form of relationship and conflict management strategy had the same effect on men and women, material and status variables did not significantly affect men's satisfaction.<sup>34</sup> In the questionnaire used in our research, relationship satisfaction could be assessed on a scale of 1 to 10. In a regional comparison, married people in Transylvania (9.04) and Subcarpathia (9.00) are on average the most satisfied with their relationship, followed by respondents from the Southern Slovakia (8.89) and Vojvodina (8.46).<sup>35</sup> Regarding relationship satisfaction, no significant difference can be detected by relationship type, although in Transylvania, Southern Slovakia, and Subcarpathia married couples are more satisfied with their relationships than those living in a cohabitation partnership, and the satisfaction is the opposite for Hungarians in Vojvodina. Furthermore, there is no significant difference in the relationship satisfaction of married respondents and those who have a committed relationship but live apart. In the case of married people, we examined the gender differences (see Figure 12), which at first glance shows that men are on average more satisfied with their marriage than

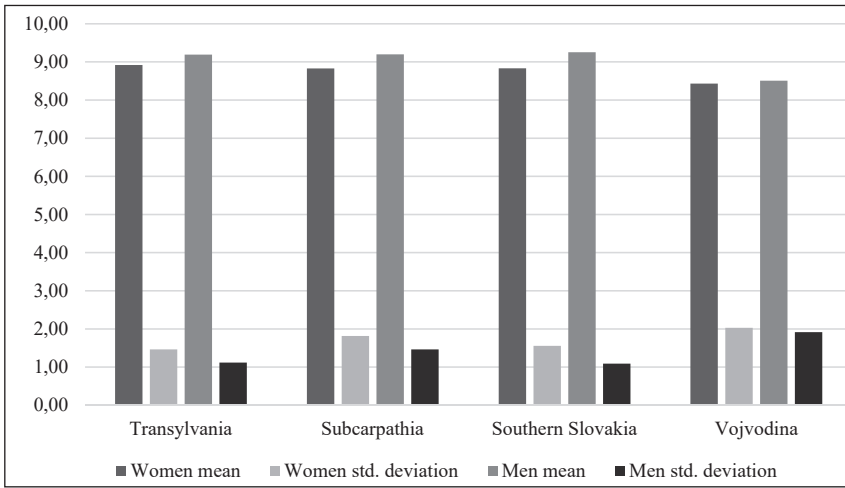
32 Márta Novák, Adrienne Stauder, and István Mucsi, *Az életminőség egészségtudományi kutatásának általános szempontjai*, ed. Mária Kopp and Mónika Erika Kovács (Budapest: Semmelweis Kiadó, 2006) 24–36.

33 Dávid Erát, "A párkapcsolattal való elégedettség időbeli alakulása: lehetséges pályák és befolyásoló tényezők," *Demográfia*, 62, no. 4 (2019): 347–384.

34 See: Erát, "A párkapcsolattal való elégedettség időbeli alakulása: lehetséges pályák és befolyásoló tényezők," 373.

35 ANOVA test:  $F=6.746$ , Sig. 0.000.

women, and the variance in their responses (except in Vojvodina) is also lower than that of women, but we only note a significant difference in the case of Transylvania<sup>36</sup> and Subcarpathia<sup>37</sup>. The presence of a child alone did not affect the relationship satisfaction in any of the regions, but it turned out that those with younger children (i.e., under the age of six) were significantly more satisfied with their relationships in Southern Slovakia and Vojvodina.



*Figure 12. Relationship Satisfaction of married couples, by region and sex (means, where 1 = very dissatisfied, 10 = very satisfied)*

## Summary

The present study examined the relationship and family sociological processes along two main objectives by comparing data on the Hungarian population of four regions, Transylvania, Southern Slovakia, Vojvodina, and Subcarpathia. According to our primary goal, we wanted to give a more general picture of the relationship situation of Hungarians abroad, the relationships between the form of partnership, and childbearing based on a relatively recent cross-sectional survey conducted in 2018. In addition, our paper aimed to explore opinions and ideas about relationships, especially marriage, parenting roles, and childbearing. Finally, we undertook a more general presentation of a satisfaction index, indicating the quality of a given relationship.

36 T-test: Sig. 0.011.

37 T-test: Sig. 0.081.

Accordingly, in the first subchapter of the analysis, we reviewed the most common forms of relationships, and the relationship between formal marital status and actual relationship status, and we analyzed the correlation between a form of relationship and childbearing. Based on the results, it was concluded that among the adult populations of the four discussed regions, marriage is the most dominant form of relationship, and the most preferred when it comes to having children. At the same time, we can also conclude that in the under-30 age group, being single is much more prevalent than being married, and a significant proportion of single individuals do not have long-term relationships. This suggests that, as is reflected in European trends, for the majority of adults in most of the regions we studied, marriage is typically not as common relationship until the age of 30. Above the age of 30, however, most of the study population is married. The exception is Southern Slovakia, where a relatively larger portion of individuals remain single after the age of 30.

As the relationship between childbearing and marriage is generally strong in the four discussed regions, childbearing is also postponed as the age of marriage increases, and out-of-wedlock childbearing is not typical. It should be noted that although the proportion of unmarried single parents is likely to be higher at the time of childbearing, this condition typically does not remain so in most regions. It is no coincidence that more than half of the respondents consider it important to become married before having a child, and relatively few (3–10%) believe that marriage is not an important prerequisite for having a child. In Southern Slovakia, where marriage is least prevalent, more people live in a cohabitation relationship or as a single parent than in the other three regions. It is worth adding that in Subcarpathia, which is the most conservative region in terms of family formation practices (e.g., early marriage, quasi-exclusive marriages, low number of out-of-wedlock children), while the proportion of singles is not as high as in other regions, most people live alone or in a cohabitation relationship.

In the theoretical introductory section, we briefly referred to the changes observed in the field of relationships and marriage, from the perspective of expectations and perceptions of marriage. Based on the references in the literature, we presented the primary ideal types of marriage and the main components of each marriage model. In the second half of the analysis, we examined components of an ideal marriage on the basis of empirical data.

In the section on opinions on marriage, we pointed out that the components of an ideal marriage are not only multifaceted, but are also—possibly due to the operationalization process—are difficult to identify. Evaluations suggest that in addition to the emotional dimension of marriage, such as humane and moral romantic behavior, passion, and sexuality, people attach great importance to having a child together, transparency, the achievement of individual goals, and even to financial security.

Although in many areas of everyday life the unequal division of tasks organized on the basis of gender is pushed into the background, the results show that the need for a balanced division of labor is also essential for a good marriage. Respondents believe that in a

sufficiently good marriage, common taste and cultural (i.e., national, religious) homogamy are also important. If, however, three primary components of the ideal image of marriage must be singled out, they are loyalty, mutual respect, and love.

The specific behaviors and attitudes covered by the underlying meanings of these concepts cannot be satisfactorily identified in the present research. However, based on the results of the analysis, we can conclude that the ideal marriage picture is relatively consistent (i.e., the values and expectations considered outstanding from the point of view of marriage do not show significant differences in the groups of unmarried singles and married people).

Support for childbearing, as well as the expectation of motherhood and fatherhood, is exceptionally high, with the exception of certain regional differences. Another important finding of the analysis is that childbearing and the two-parent family model enjoy a high level of support in most regions, not only among married couples but also among those living in a cohabiting relationship. Within the framework of this study, although we did not have the opportunity to examine the relationship element of quality of life in detail, we highlighted that there is a significant difference in the level of satisfaction between men and women without children versus those with young children.

Options for further analysis include a multivariate analysis of the quality of relationships, a more detailed and accurate picture of satisfaction, and a deeper examination of marriage ideals and relationship expectations using qualitative methods. These analyses can provide answers to questions about relationship formation and the functioning of successful relationships, and possibly identify the factors that lead to the breakdown of relationships.