HISTORY OF POPULATION

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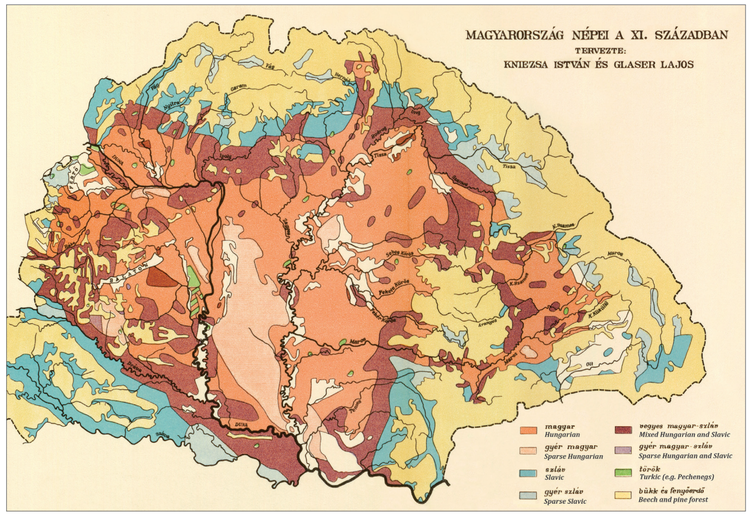
From the 10th century to the end of the 15th century

Hungarians, led by Árpád, arrived at the end of the 9th century in the sparsely populated Carpathian Basin, in the buffer zone between the Kingdom of the East Franks and the Bulgarian Empire, which had a Slavic and partially Slavicised Avar population of about 200,000 to 300,000 people. The *conquering Hungarians* seem to have been a *mixture of people*. The group of Hungarians arose from cohabiting and merging members of various sporadic populations. Notwithstanding the uncertainties of population estimates, it can be stated that the population of the Carpathian Basin was made up of three layers. The first consisted of Hungarians and the non-Hungarians who arrived with them. The second was formed by fragments of the people living in the Carpathian Basin. The third included immigrants: the 'guests', the newcomers. From a demographic point of view, it has to be noted that the occupiers of the territory, the Hungarians, represented such a critical mass and power that was enough to occupy the Carpathian Basin, to settle the region and to preserve the language up to now.



1 *Peoples of Hungary in the 11th century*

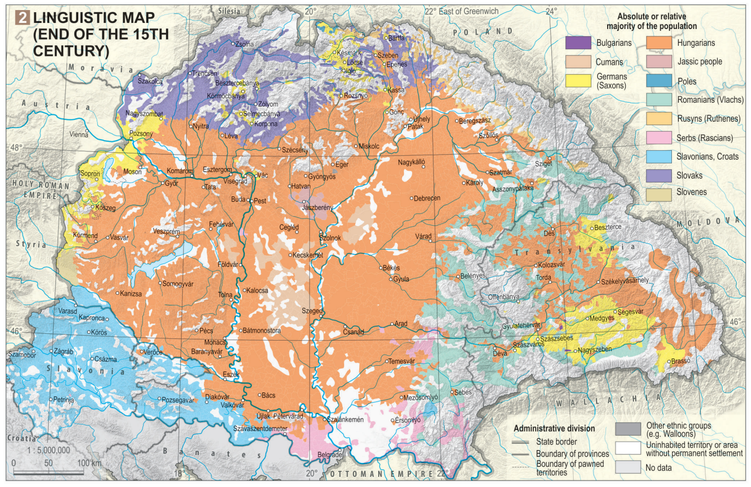
In the view of most historians, the population of the Carpathian Basin was between 300 and 600 thousand people at the time of the Hungarian conquest. Gy. Györffy estimated the population already living in the basin at around 200 thousand people and the population of the Hungarians taking part in the conquest at around 400 thousand. Natural increase in the medieval and early modern periods was slow despite high fertility. Life expectancy at birth must have been below 30 years. Thus, natural increase was likely small even in favourable periods. Besides the above, several major demographic catastrophes hit the Carpathian Basin. Catastrophes were caused partly by wars and party by pandemics. Based on analogous events in subsequent periods, it seems that the destruction of pandemics significantly exceeded that of wars. In this regard, however, periods of continuous war (such as the Ottoman occupation in the 16th and 17th centuries) were the exception. Slow natural increase and the effects of demographic catastrophes could be counterbalanced by migration. Still, the population of the Carpathian Basin probably did not exceed 1 million at the beginning of the 12th century and it may have been between one and two million before the Mongol (Tatar) invasion. The extent of destruction is reflected in low population growth in the subsequent period. Even in the early 14th century the population was only slightly higher. According to recent research, the population of Hungary at the end of the Middle Ages was around 3 million. Population density was low and uneven in distribution; it may have approached ten people per square km by the beginning of the 16th century 1.

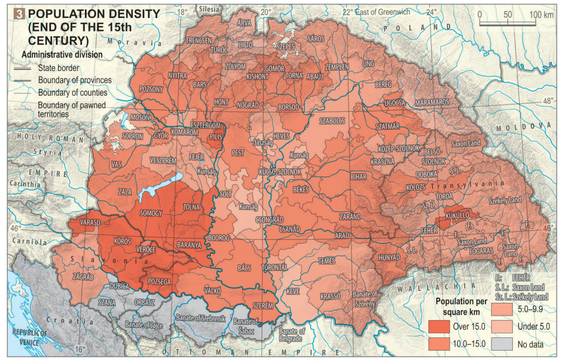
1 DEVELOPMENT OF POPULATION AND POPULATION DENSITY (900–1910)

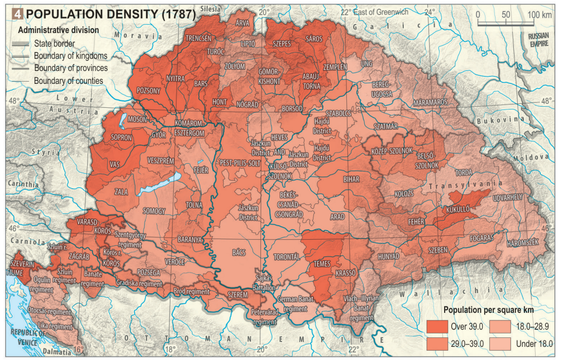
Year	Population number (million people)*		Population density (population per square km)*	
	Estimate	Census data	Estimate	Census data
900	0.3–0.6	—	0.8–1.8	—
1050	0.5–1.0	—	1.5–3.0	—
1100	1.2	—	3.6	—
1200	1.0–2.2	—	3.0–6.7	—
1240	1.2	—	3.6	—
1250	1.1	—	3.3	—
1300	1.4–2.3	—	4.2–7.0	—
1440	3.4	—	10.3	—
1500	2.9–3.3	—	8.8–10.0	—
1600	3.5	—	10.6	—
1700	4.0	—	12.1	—
1790	—	9.4	—	28.5
1851	—	12.9	—	39.1
1857	—	13.7	—	41.5
1869	—	15.5	—	47.0
1880	—	15.7	—	47.6
1890	—	17.5	—	53.0
1900	—	19.3	—	58.5
1910	—	20.9	—	63.3

*Data are calculated for a state territory of 330 thousand square km in all years.

During the 11th century Hungarians settled in the forested steppe areas, along river valleys that were important transport corridors, and in gently undulating terrain. Such areas were suited to the semi-nomadic lifestyle and were reminiscent of the natural environment of their former homeland. Hungarians migrating to the Carpathian Basin from the east had been in contact with the Greek Orthodox Church of the Byzantines since the 6th century. After the conquest in the 9th century and until the mid-10th century, the Hungarian tribal chieftains and the southern and eastern Hungarians were under the influence of this Church. In the late 10th century, Géza, Grand Prince of the Hungarians, broke with the Byzantine orientation. His son, Saint Stephen (I), laid the foundations of the independent Western Christian (Catholic) Hungarian kingdom (1001). Thereafter, the kingdom and the Catholic Church were administered as an organic unity, with the process being completed in the 11th century.







By the end of the 11th century, the Hungarian ethnic area had been extended to the foot of the mountain ranges 1. By the 15th century, the area inhabited by people speaking Hungarian had been further expanded, as a consequence of Hungarian (mainly Székely) settlements in the marginal regions and the assimilation of the majority of Slavs, Pechenegs, Cumans (Kun) and Jassic (Jász) people in the inner areas. At the same time, from the 13th century on, the Slavic (Slovak, Rusyn) and Vlach (Romanian) language areas became larger and more contiguous in the formerly uninhabited (often forested) mountainous areas of the Carpathians 2. This development was the outcome of royal land donations, castle constructions, and colonisations. Despite ongoing Serbian immigration, the population of the counties most affected by the anti-Turkish defensive measures in the southern areas decreased significantly. Even so, at the end of the 15th century, the area of highest population density remained in the southwest of the country 3. As regards religious affiliation, nearly 90% of the population (Hungarians, Germans, Slovaks, Slavonians, Croats, Slovenians) was Roman Catholic, one tenth (Romanians, Serbs, Rusyns) was Orthodox and 0.3% was Jewish.

From the beginning of the 16th century to the beginning of the 18th century

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Ottoman conquest turned much of the country into a battlefield. The demographic consequences of this turn of events are almost impossible to assess but are rightly considered catastrophic. Although the loss of human lives and material destruction were uneven in time and space, it is known that the population of Hungary grew only minimally during these two centuries. Indeed, according to the most optimistic estimates, it could not have been more than 4 million at the beginning of the 18th century. The western and northern peripheral areas of Hungary were somewhat more protected. From the second half of the 17th century on, the most serious consequences derived from military events – the liberation wars and Rákóczi's War of Independence – and from the recurrent epidemics, especially that of 1709–1710, which killed hundreds of thousands of people.

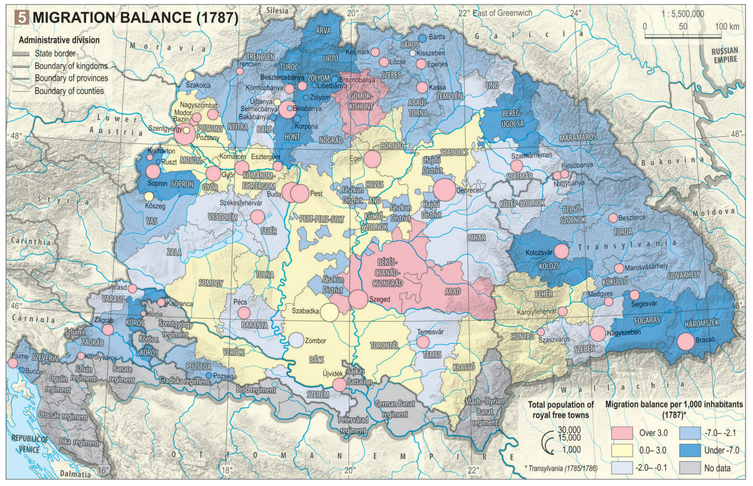
During the two centuries between the Battle of Mohács (1526) and the suppression of Rákóczi's War of Independence (1711), the ethnic–religious (Hungarian and Catholic dominated) spatial structure of the Late Middle Ages was finally broken up. The Hungarian population disappeared almost entirely from the southern areas, and most of the surviving Hungarian population fled the Transylvanian Basin, the central parts of the Alföld (Great Hungarian Plain), and the southern parts of Transdanubia. In the Principality of Transylvania, which maintained the continuity of Hungarian statehood during a century and a half of Ottoman occupation, the Habsburg–Romanian and Turkish–Tatar military campaigns between 1599 and 1604 and again between 1657 and 1661 were particularly destructive for the Hungarians living there. Indeed, the Hungarian settlements connecting the Hungarian ethnic blocks of Székely Land and the Partium were destroyed to the greatest extent. As a result, from the second half of the 17th century, Hungarians were no more the majority, but a minority population in Transylvania. In the more protected mountainous areas, the new majority population, the Romanians steadily increased, benefitting from the continuous supply lines from Wallachia and Moldavia.

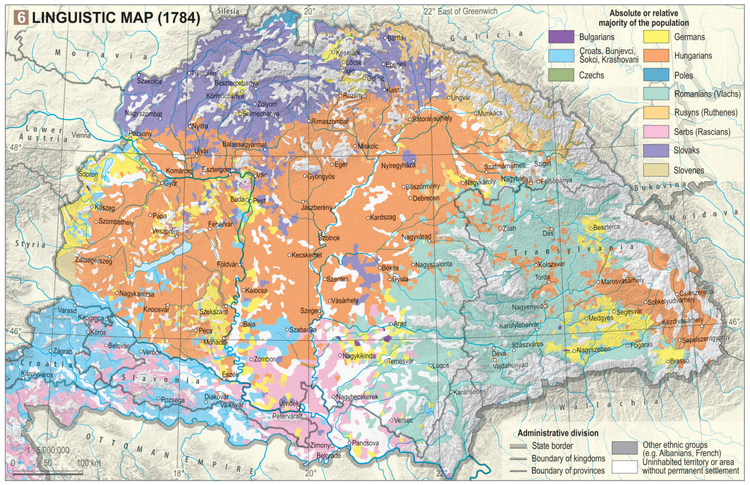
In the first half of the 16th century, during the decades of Ottoman occupation and ideological-political chaos, religious affiliation was influenced by the advance of the Protestant Reformation in Hungary, which began in 1517. An additional factor was the immigration of Serbs, Romanians and Rusyns of Orthodox faith. The religious structure of the population of the Kingdom of Hungary is known more accurately from the end of the 18th century. At that time, 48% of the population was Roman Catholic, 23% belonged to Protestant denominations, and 28% were affiliated with the Greek rite churches. In the tripartite Hungary of the 16th and 17th centuries, the proportion of Protestants may have been the same as that of Catholics. Only a violent programme of re-Catholicisation (the Counter-Reformation) could shift the balance in favour of the latter. The religious composition of the population was even more diverse, given that the various ethnic groups often belonged to different denominations. In the 17th century, almost all the Germans and Slovaks professed Lutheran (Evangelical) doctrines, while the vast majority of Hungarians supported the Swiss Reformation from the 1550s onwards. Only the Croats and a small number of Hungarians (e.g. in the eastern half of Székely Land, in Jászság and along the western border) remained Catholic.

As a result of the Counter-Reformation (the 'Catholic renewal'), which began in the 17th century, many Protestant Hungarians who did not want to catholicize fled areas of Habsburg authority to the more tolerant parts of the Carpathian Basin, including Transylvania and areas occupied by the Turks. Another success of the Counter-Reformation was the union of Orthodox Rusyns with the Catholic Church (1646) and the Catholicisation of a sixth of Orthodox Romanians (1699).

From the beginning of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century

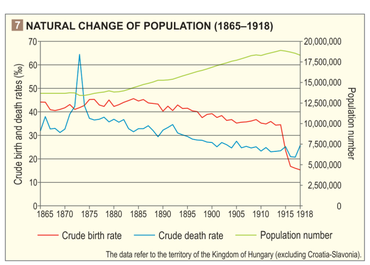
Following a century and a half of Turkish occupation and after the suppression of Rákóczi's War of Independence, there was an upturn in immigration to the depopulated areas, including the highly fertile Alföld region. During the wars, Slovaks, Rusyns and Romani-





ans migrated en masse from the overpopulated northern and eastern mountainous regions, which had offered greater protection, to the inner lowland areas inhabited by Hungarians and became scattered inside the Hungarian language area. In addition to voluntary migration, economic and religious factors led to organised colonisations. In the course of such programmes, settlers from the Holy Roman Empire – most of whom were Catholic Germans – also came to Hungary. As a result, a highly diverse ethnic–religious structure arose in certain areas of the Carpathian Basin (mainly in the southern areas and in southeastern Transdanubia) during the 18th century.

The *census* undertaken during the *reign of Joseph II* (1784–1787) gave relatively accurate data on the population of Hungary for the first time. According to the census, the population of Hungary was 8.5 million. However, this number did not include people living in the Military Border or soldiers in the army. Moreover, data input errors were also possible. In view of the above, it can be assumed that the population of the countries of the Hungarian Crown (more or less the entire Carpathian Basin) *exceeded 9 million people* 1. Alongside a high rate of immigration (of up to one million people), high mortality remained the most important population regulator. The 'ordinarily' high level of mortality was raised further by demographic disasters. The last major national plague epidemic killed about 300,000 people between 1738 and 1742. After 1831, cholera claimed many victims. The last major epidemic in 1872 and 1873 signalled the end of the old demographic system. However, fertility levels were high (according to local studies, married women had up to 8-9 children during the period of fertility), although in some regions (e.g. Ormánság in Baranya County) the conscious regulation of fertility may have begun in the late 18th or early 19th century. At the same time, in Hungary early marriage (24 years in the 1770s for men and 21 years for women at their first marriage) was common. These average ages had barely increased even by the second half of the 19th century (men were 26-27 years old and women were 23 at their first marriage). Unlike in Western Europe where people married at older ages, the timing of the marriage did not limit the number of births. Instead, fertility in marriage was the main regulatory factor in the demographic system. Early marriage also meant a relatively high proportion of large multi-generational families. Yet, in 1787 and 1869, the average household size was only around 5 due to high mortality. The ratio of modern two-generational nuclear families was 70% in 1869.

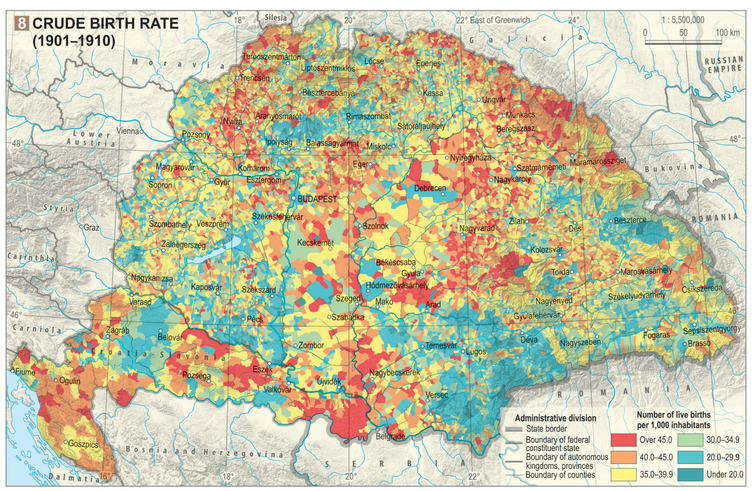


Significant population growth in the 18th century resulted in *the 'repopulation' of Hungary*. Whereas at the beginning of the century the *southern and central parts of the Alföld* were sparsely populated, according to the census at the end of the century, population density was particularly low in only a few counties (e.g. Máramaros) and only the southern and eastern peripheral areas and several regions of the Alföld were relatively sparsely populated 4. The population was concentrated mainly in the western and northern parts of Hungary with a higher population density (mainly in the Croatian, western Transdanubian, and Upper Hungarian counties, which were more secure and had been less affected by wartime devastation during the Turkish occupation).

Internal migration from the aforementioned overpopulated mountainous areas inhabited by non-Hungarian speaking people targeted the Alföld, which was sparsely populated at the time but had more favourable conditions for agricultural production. Thus, the northern, western and eastern areas of Hungary, which were often mountainous and overpopulated and thus had low population retaining capacity, suffered considerable migration losses. In contrast, *migration gains* were recorded in the *central and agriculturally more fertile areas of the Alföld* (e.g. Békés, Csongrád and Csanád counties) and in the *major cities and regional centres* (e.g. Pest, Buda, Pozsony, Fiume, Kolozsvár, Marosvásárhely, Nagyszeben) 5.

Reflecting a doubling of the population through migration in the 18th century, the ethnic-language structure of the Carpathian Basin changed fundamentally. Although there are no accurate data on the ethnic-language structure until the mid-19th century, the *ratio of Hungarians*, the state-forming nation, had probably *decreased to one-third* by the end of the 18th century (from an estimated two-thirds at the end of the 15th century). The heavily shrunken *Hungarian ethnic territory was split in two parts*, a larger and a smaller block (the Pannonian Basin and Székely Land) 6.

While we can still provide only a general outline of demographic processes in the first half of the 19th century, detailed data are available for the *period of the Dual Monarchy* (1867–1918). In the first half of the century, cholera epidemics and high mortality in general slowed natural growth, but the increase was still significant. In the second half of the 19th century it is estimated that the *population* of the Kingdom of Hungary (without Croatia-Slavonia) increased *from 13 to 17 million people*. The traditional demographic era of regular mortality disasters (the last cholera epidemic took place in 1872–1873) slowing down the continuous growth of population drew to a close in the 1870s 7. Thereafter, however, until 1913, the number of *births* in Hungary was characterised by a *slow increase*, while that of *deaths* by a *gradual decrease*. These two processes were broadly steady from 1874 to 1913, resulting in a total population increase of just over five and a half million in historical Hungary. However, this positive process was interrupted by

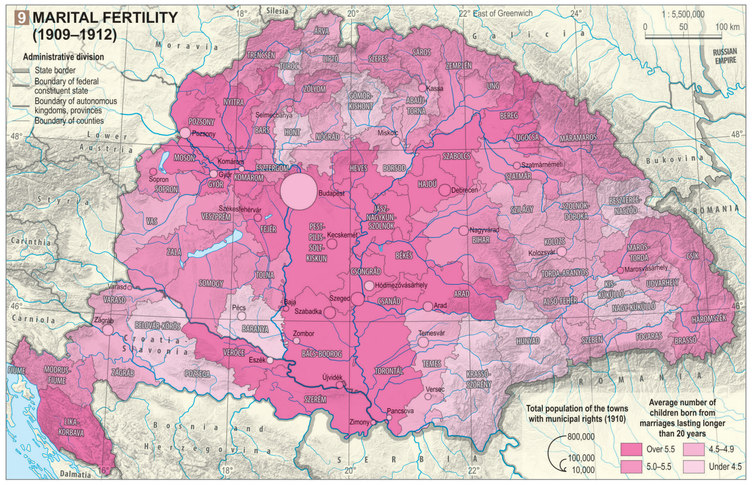


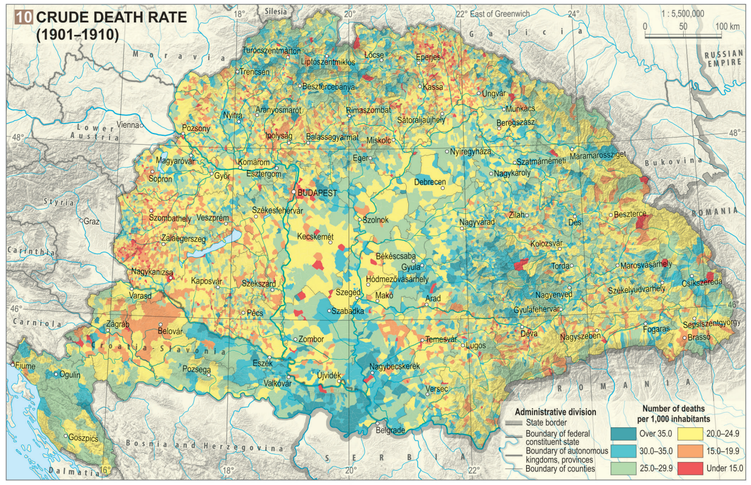
World War I, which halved the number of births and halted the improvement in mortality for a time. Between 1915 and 1918, the population of Hungary decreased by nearly 400,000, a figure that was similar to the number of deaths in the last cholera epidemic. If we look at birth and death numbers relative to population numbers (crude birth and death rates), a parallel decline in both can be detected from the 1880s onwards. This can be explained by a specifically Hungarian version of the demographic transition: the economic, social and cultural *modernisation of Hungary was associated with a decrease in mortality* (an increase in lifespan), but by the second half of the century and almost *concurrently, fertility decline and birth control* had also become common at national level. These latter factors slowed the growth of the population, although the growth rate remained significant.

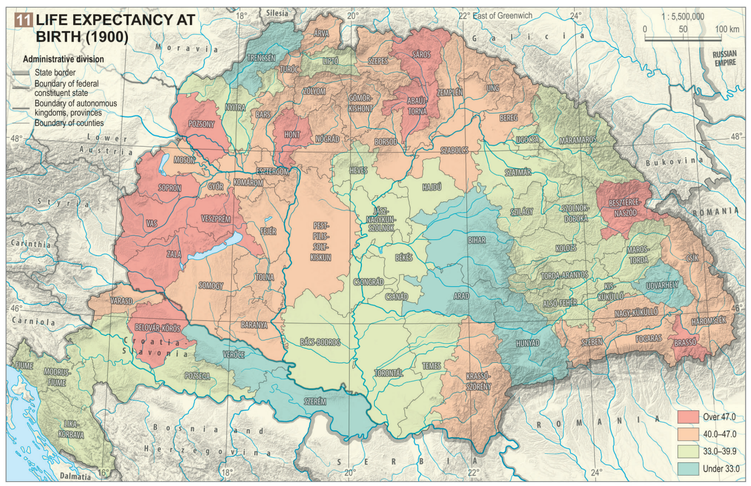
The demographic transition is reflected in the spatial distribution of the crude *birth rate* in the first decade of the 20th century 8. The increasing but patchy incidence of low values (below 20‰) reflect, on the one hand, *rural areas of early birth control, one-child family model* (e.g. southern Baranya, Őrség, Sárköz in Transdanubia; Hont, Nógrád and Gömör counties in Upper Hungary; the northern Banat plain and the Banat Mountains in the Banat; Kalotaszeg, Hunyad and the Saxon areas in northern and southern Transylvania) and, on the other hand, trends in Budapest and other major cities and industrial centres. The *one-child family model* as a conscious demographic attitude and way of life, resulting in the *rapid decline and ageing of the population*, cannot be regarded as specific to certain ethnic or religious groups, as Calvinist Hungarians, Lutheran Slovaks and Saxons, Catholic Swabians and Orthodox Romanians were equally dominant in the above mentioned core areas. Experts have linked the spreading of the phenomenon in the 19th century with poverty caused by a shortage of land and a fear of dividing wealth. In the case of the capital and other major cities, which were targets of internal migration, a significant proportion of incomers were young and unmarried, and that had a negative impact on the birth rate.

The average number of children in families at the end of the 19th century was 5, which decreased to 4 in the first two decades of the 20th century. The lower values of marital fertility were characteristic in urban areas and in the southern part of Hungary, the central part of Upper Hungary and some counties in Transylvania. Meanwhile, the Alföld and the Kisalföld (Little Hungarian Plain) were typically considered regions of high marital fertility 9.

In the case of the crude *mortality rates*, the decrease can be detected even more clearly, as high values (above 30‰) are exceptionally rare 10. The previous natural spatial relationship between birth and death rates (due to high infant and child mortality, a high number of births accompanied by a high number of deaths) was on the decline. A weakening of the spatial relationship between the two rates, however, also indicates that in most places an improvement in mortality preceded the decrease in fertility. Low death rates could be observed mainly in the western third of Hungary, in areas with low infant mortality characterised also by one-child families, and in Budapest and in some of the major cities, where the previous correlation between urban settlements and high mortality also disappeared. The spatial pattern of mortality indicators outlined above, the spatial spreading of mortality transition, is also reflected in the spatial distribution of *life expectancy at birth*, including the mortality conditions of all age groups 11. Particularly unfavourable, pre-transition mortality levels occurred in the eastern and southern peripheral regions of the Alföld (e.g. in Bihar, Arad, Banat and Slavonia). In the latter areas, the phenomenon was often caused by the relatively high level of *infant mortality*, which resulted in more than a third of newborns dying before their first birthday 12. In contrast, infant mortality had already fallen below 200‰ in western Transdanubia with mostly low fertility, and in most of Croatia and Upper Hungary, in Transylvania and in Budapest.





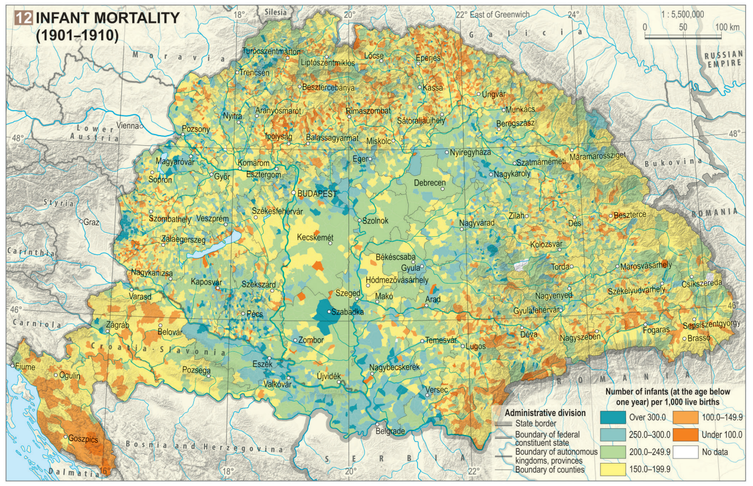


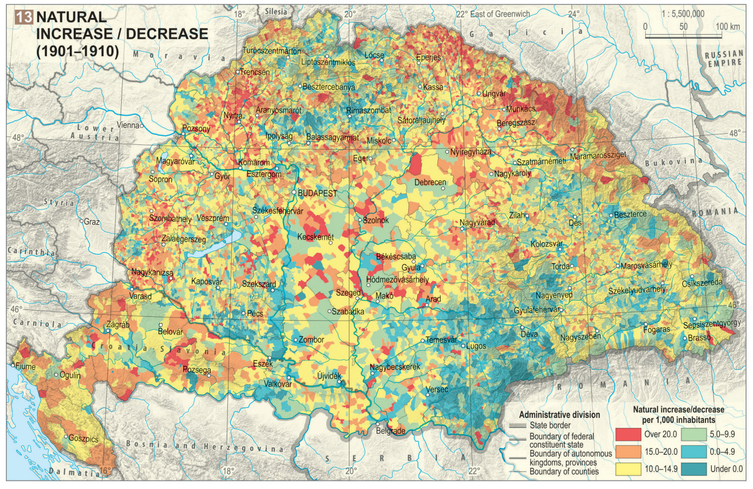
The difference between the crude birth and death rates is the *natural increase* (or decrease) 13. In addition to the increasingly widespread decrease in mortality, differences in fertility and the birth rates are the main causes of spatial differences in natural increase. Thus, the lowest values and even natural decrease (with the number of deaths already exceeding the number of live births) are typical for the traditional areas of early birth control mentioned above 8. All these suggest that as a result of the demographic transition, Hungary gradually moved from an old mortality-controlled demographic system to a modern fertility-controlled one, as families consciously began to regulate the number of children and the timing of their birth.

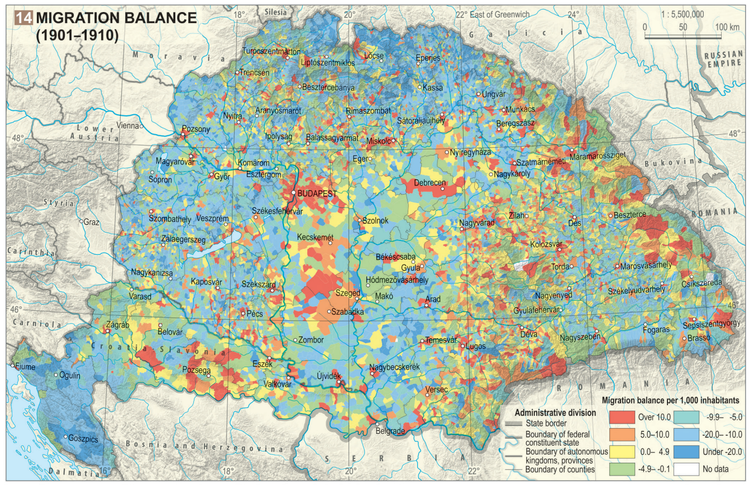
In addition to natural increase, actual population changes are influenced by *migratory movements*. The net migration rate per one thousand people designates the target and source areas of internal and international migration 14. In areas with low carrying capacity in terms of the agricultural population but inhabited by people with significant natural increase (e.g. regions in the barren Dinarides inhabited by Serbs and Croats, and in the northern border region in the Carpathians with Slovaks and Rusyns) the local excess population sought prosperity elsewhere, thus causing considerable local migration losses. To a lesser degree, similar emigration zones arose in areas with German and Hungarian populations in Transdanubia and the southern regions. At the same time, *Budapest and its expanding agglomeration, other major cities and the newly booming industrial areas were the primary targets of internal migration*, accommodating large numbers of newcomers. Extensive rural areas with previously sparse populations were also among the winners of internal migration at the turn of the 20th century. During this period, the *mass outflow of the agricultural population to the outlying fragmented farmsteads ('tanyas')* near towns in the Alföld (mainly in the Danube–Tisza Midland) intensified. *Slavonia* also saw outstanding migration gains because after the dissolution of the Military Border (1871–1881), enterprising farmers and landless labourers (Hungarians but also ethnic Germans, Czechs, Slovaks and Rusyns) migrated (mostly) from Transdanubia and Bácska in large numbers to the extensive and cheap Slavonian lands that had become available for sale.

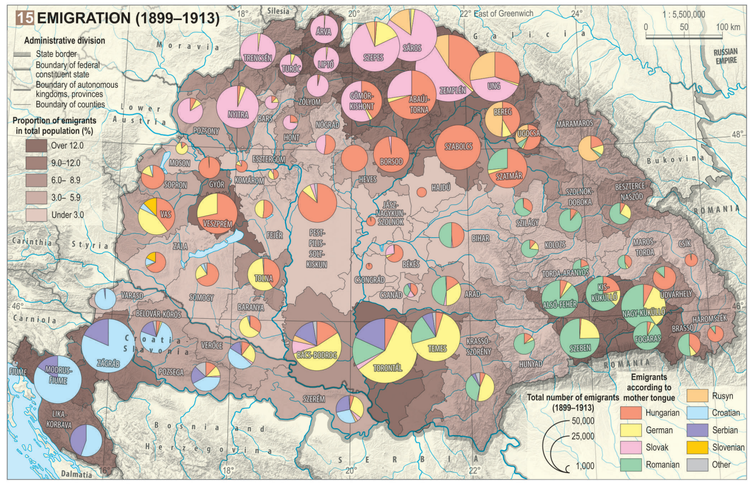
During the 19th century, as the modern migration and colonisation campaigns were gradually discontinued, the number of *Hungarians* living in the centrally located areas with the most favourable agricultural production conditions in the Carpathian Basin, which therefore had a higher carrying capacity, tripled compared to that of the nationalities. Thus, the ratio of Hungarians in the total population increased from 35% to 48% between 1787 and 1910 (and to 54.5% if we exclude the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia). Ethnic processes favourable for Hungarians included a higher rate of natural increase, the scattering of the nationalities from the mountainous peripheries with unfavourable agricultural conditions in the central Hungarian ethnic areas, natural assimilation in what was a Hungarian language milieu, particularly affecting the urban citizens and a lower rate of emigration for Hungarians compared to that of the nationalities 15.

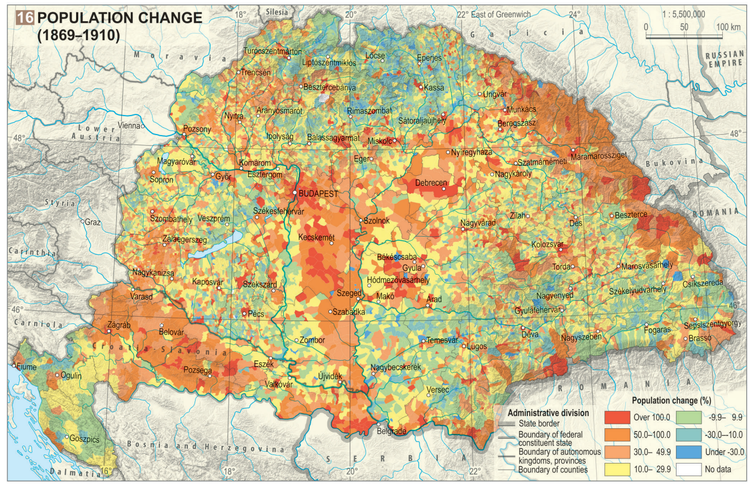
In the first half of the 19th century, the most striking change in the *religious structure* was the increasing conversion of people with Orthodox religion (especially Romanians in northern Transylvania) to the Greek Catholic faith. In the liberal era that followed the Austro-Hungarian Compromise (1867), the *emancipation of non-Roman Catholic religious groups* intensified. A liberal attitude towards *Jews* in the Kingdom of Hungary resulted in a significant Galician immigration from the end of the 18th century. In the final third of the 19th century, however, this significant migration gain was reversed for Jews at national level, as they settled increasingly in Austria, particularly in its more developed areas adjacent to Hungary (thus mainly in Vienna). Large numbers of people also emigrated to America, which offered a much more promising future than Hungary.

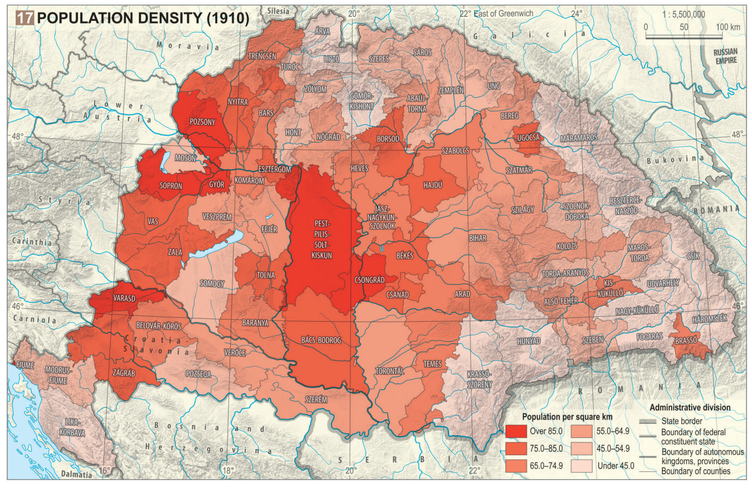












The map on emigration from Hungary (1899–1913) 15 clearly illustrates the regions and ethnic groups most affected by *emigration*. The main drivers of diffuse emigration at that time were harsh natural conditions for agricultural production, the associated poverty, and the informal channels of information that led people to emigrate. Contact with Poles, Rusyns and Jews living in Galicia, who were the first to experience the benefits of emigration to America, gave rise to the largest emigration core area in Hungary in the northeast, mainly inhabited by Slovaks, Rusyns and Hungarians. For similar reasons, the propensity to emigrate increased in the Croatian and Serbian areas of the barren Dinarides due to contact with Croatians on the coast of Dalmatia. Largely due to the desire to accumulate capital and reasons related to inheritance (the heir to the estate was the firstborn), a particularly high proportion of ethnic Germans (not only from Transdanubia, but also from the highly fertile southern regions) tried their luck overseas. Romanians from the Banat and from southern Transylvania, having been encouraged by the German example, emigrated to America in large numbers. The emigration statistics outlined here do not cover the vast majority of migrations to Austria (mostly to Vienna), as such movements were not subject to authorisation. Nor do they include those Székely emigrants who left illegally for Romania through the Carpathians. At the same time, there was also a significant rate of *return migration* during this period. This partly explains why, although 1.4 million people emigrated from the Lands of the Crown of St Stephen (the Kingdom of Hungary and the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia together) between 1899 and 1913, the number of Hungarian citizens living in America around 1910 was estimated at only 800,000.

In the period between the first and last censuses of the Dual Monarchy (those of 1869 and 1910), the characteristic spatial differences in *population change* 16 were shaped in some places by natural trends in vital statistics and elsewhere by migration. The dynamic growth of the population was mostly due to natural increase in the Rusyn regions of the Northeastern Carpathians, in the Hungarian-inhabited Szabolcs region, in the Slovakian core area of the northwestern parts of Upper Hungary and in Zagorje in Croatia. However, particularly high population growth in Budapest, in the other major cities, in the booming industrial centres, in the tanya areas of the Danube–Tisza Midland and in Slavonia was mainly due to internal migration gains. As a demographic antipode of these regions, a significant population decrease was registered – due to a small natural increase/decrease – in the southern belt of the central parts of Upper Hungary and the southeastern part of Transdanubia and – due to migration losses – in the eastern third of Upper Hungary and the Dinarides. In the northern parts of the Banat, which were mostly inhabited by Swabians, and in some parts of Transylvania, where the Saxon population was dominant, both factors of vital statistics played a role in the significant decrease of the population.

In the period from the end of the 18th century until 1910, the *population density* in Hungary changed due to the above mentioned trends in vital statistics, whereby the western (Croatian, Transdanubian and Upper Hungarian) counties in the vicinity of the Austrian provinces maintained their high population density values – partly in consequence of the economic benefits associated with their proximity to Austria (benefits that dated back to the time of Turkish occupation). In contrast, the eastern third of Upper Hungary, which had been densely populated until the 19th century, constituted one of the more sparsely populated parts of Hungary in 1910 due to mass emigration 17. At the same time, the fertile Alföld, which had attracted the inhabitants of the mountainous periphery like a magnet, and the capital city (established in 1872 as Budapest), as well as its environs, had a high population density.

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Design and typography
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Printing
Pannónia Nyomda Kft. (Budapest)

Publisher: László Kiss (Director general)
Eötvös Loránd Research Network (ELKH), Research Centre for Astronomy and Earth Sciences (CSFK), www.csfk.org

The publication is supported by:
Government of Hungary
Ministry for Innovation and Technology (ITM)
Eötvös Loránd Research Network (ELKH)
Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA)

Closing date of editing: 1st May 2021

ISBN 978-963-9545-58-8ö
ISBN 978-963-9545-64-9

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