

## ZEMPLÉN GATEWAY – PITFALLS

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The study is based on an already completed research project. The main purpose of this project was to integrate the multiple disadvantaged (mostly Romany) people, who had been excluded from the labour market; to improve their quality of life with training and counselling, thus to reduce tension in the Hungarian and Slovakian areas of the Zemplén region.<sup>1</sup>

As the Zemplén microregion is falling behind, and its inhabitants are facing increasing inequality, there is an important role for identity examination. The multiple disadvantaged are gravely divided by their ethnicity. In what follows we take into account similarities and differences in the lifestyles, desires and everyday lives of people of different ethnic groups living in this area. Except for their uniqueness, these people resemble each other in that the social and economic changes of these past decades have caused radical changes in their lives. We have to understand that as most people's lifestyles and working conditions have changed for the worse, so their chances of breaking out have also decreased. When we were searching for the reasons of the above, we knew we had to pay special attention to the identity problems markedly characterizing this region.

When a nation undergoes a societal change that forces it to leave behind its shattering traditional, patriarchal lifestyle and its traditional folk culture being the ancient carrier of its identity, then a need emerges in community members most closely connected to the traditions, to preserve and safeguard this vanishing lifestyle and culture. This has led some outstanding musicians, singers, artists and poets to transform their messages into independent pieces of work, especially since the 1970s.

1 Hungarian-Slovakian comparative complex training programme for the reintegration of the Romas project supported by the Hungarian National Research and Development Programme (NKFP 5/035/04).

Until the beginning of the 1970s Romany culture meant for the mainstream society mainly Gypsy music in cafes and Gypsy folklore that could be witnessed on the “black trains” carrying Gypsy commuters. The traditional Romany lifestyle was disintegrating, traditional Roma crafts and professions had been ended up, a good part of old customs along with intellectual culture (including folk songs and folk tales being recorded on celluloid strips) was withering, and thus they became increasingly divided in determining their own situation. Traditionalists formed close-knit communities, while those participating in assimilation and integration processes received some new elements of everyday life that helped them to fit the social division of labour, but hampered them in preserving traditions. Since the middle of the 1980s this already split Romany society has been become further disintegrated as Roma people are the main losers of the economic restructuring following the political system change in the labour market, in schools and also in business. By the turn of the Millennium these disadvantages were coupled with regional and health problems causing more inner disagreement and sharper social and economic inequalities between Roma.<sup>2</sup> This complicated social and economic situation made us necessary to put various methods together in order to be acquainted with the lifestyles of the people living in the given region.

In the interaction network the individual takes part in experiences and gets positive feelings. Those can be called back and applied in solving harder life situations and tasks. (Lived experiences can have an inspiring effect not only on emotional but also on intellectual and rational decisions, which can complete activities performed systematically and “passionately”.) Assuming that, all actions, behaviour forms, reactions to challenges were interpreted as manifestations of culture.

In past 10–15 years’ identity research focused on the Roma minority three – ideal-typical, intrinsically mixed, and not at all homogeneous – discourse types can be distinguished: the “analysing–diagnosing” discourse, the “political–civil society” discourse and the “criminalizing” discourse.<sup>3</sup>

The present research project used a sample of 300 people and measured the acceptance and rejection level of sixteen social groups on a five point scale. According to the mean values, Hungarians living abroad were the most liked group by our respondents. The second most liked group was that of successful entrepreneurs, followed by the third most liked group: Germans. The group of unemployed people was a relatively liked one. This result can be probably

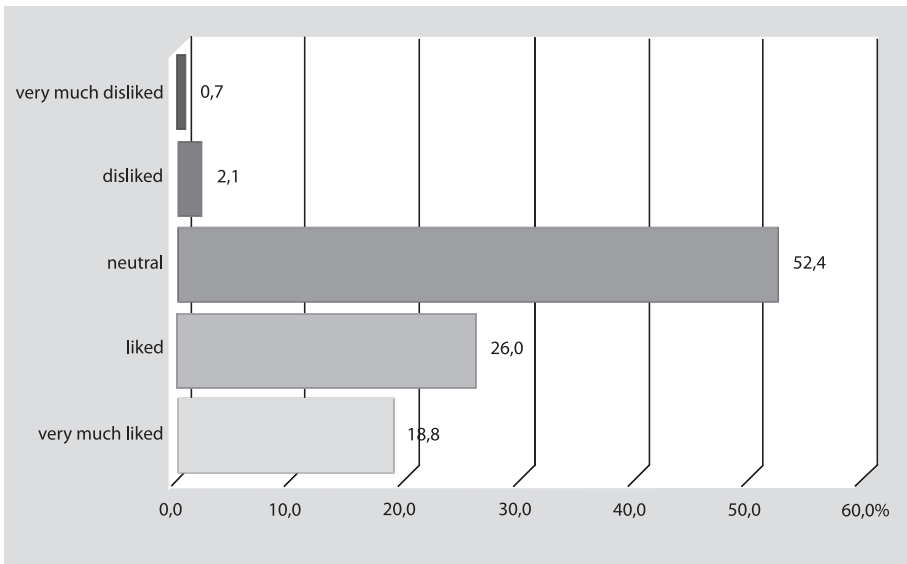
2 Babusik, F. (2000, 2002): *BAZ megyei vizsgálat a cigányokról*. Budapest, Delphoi Consulting. Kutatási jelentés.

3 Basham, R.–DeGroot, D. (1977): Current Approaches to the Anthropology of Urban and Complex Societies. Essay Review. *American Anthropologist*, Vol 79, Issue 2, 414–440. p. Cit. 423. p.

explained by the fact that there are quite a lot of unemployed in the families and the close environments of the respondents. The most rejected group was that of drug users, followed by the group of skinheads, and the group of alcoholics.

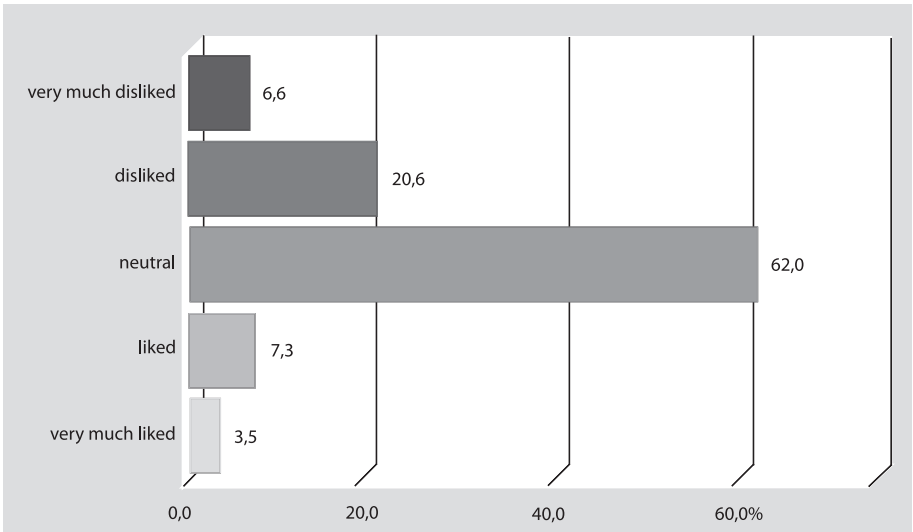
We have to consider the very high number of neutral answers at almost each of the sixteen social groups. However, there are a few exceptions, including the groups of homosexuals, skinheads, alcoholics and drug users. These groups were much more rejected than accepted. These groups are characterised not by inborn traits (such as skin colour, ethnicity, etc.), but they chose some bad problem solving strategies (drug or alcohol addiction) or a value-system widely different from that said as socially acceptable in general (homosexuals, skinheads).

### 1. How do you relate to: Hungarians living abroad?



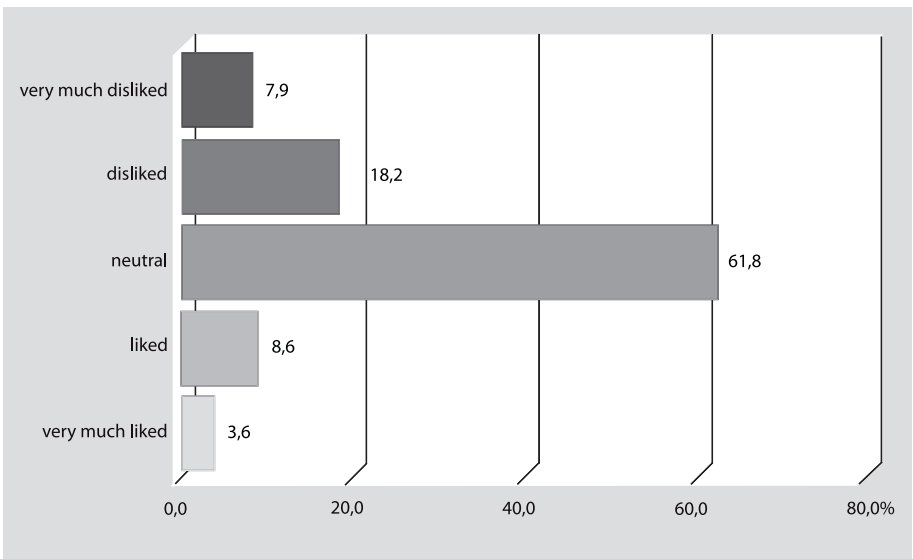
National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

## 2. How do you relate to refugees, immigrants?



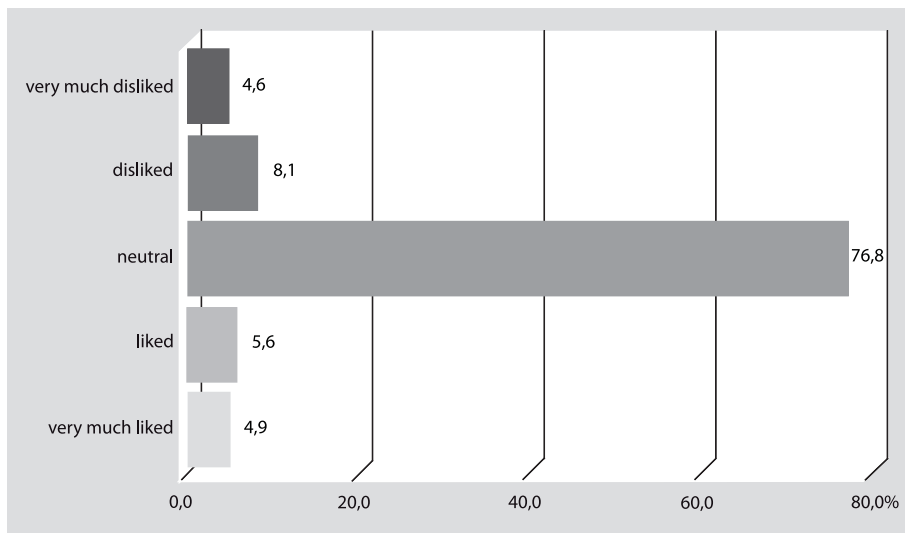
National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

## 3. How do you relate to people coming to Hungary to settle down here?



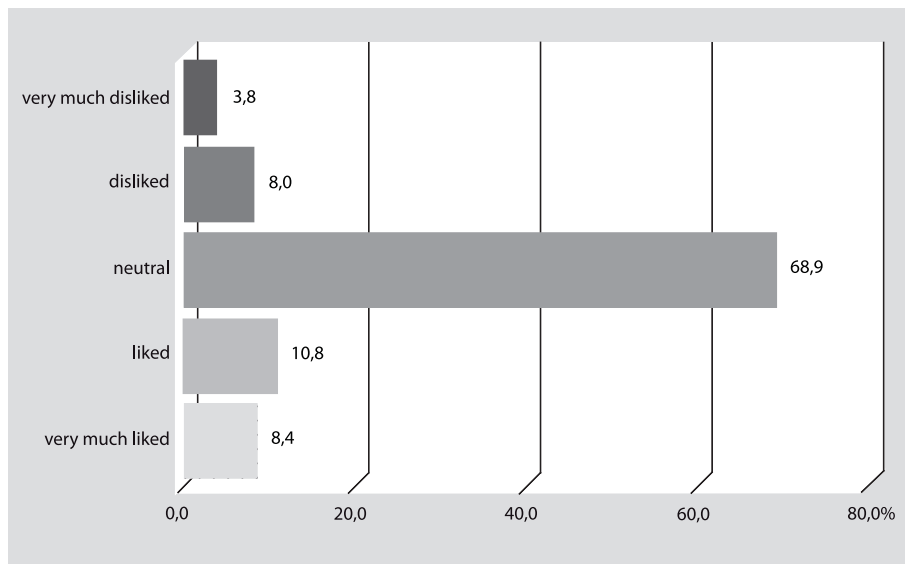
National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

4. How do you relate to Croatians?



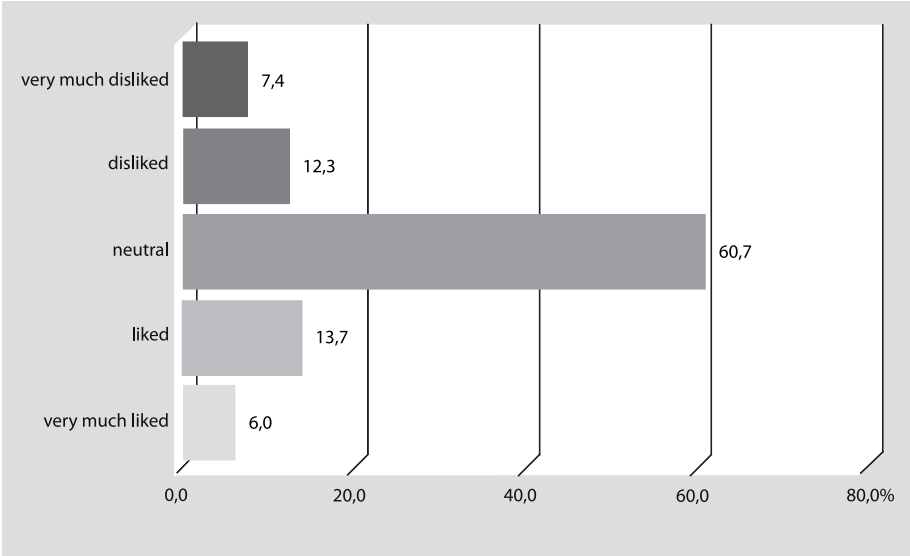
National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

5. How do you relate to Germans?



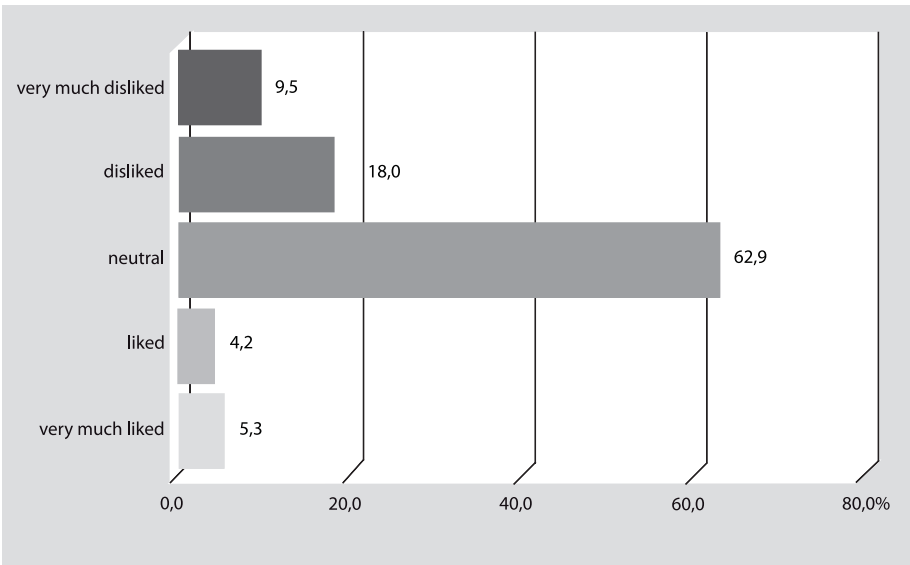
National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

6. How do you relate to Jewish people?



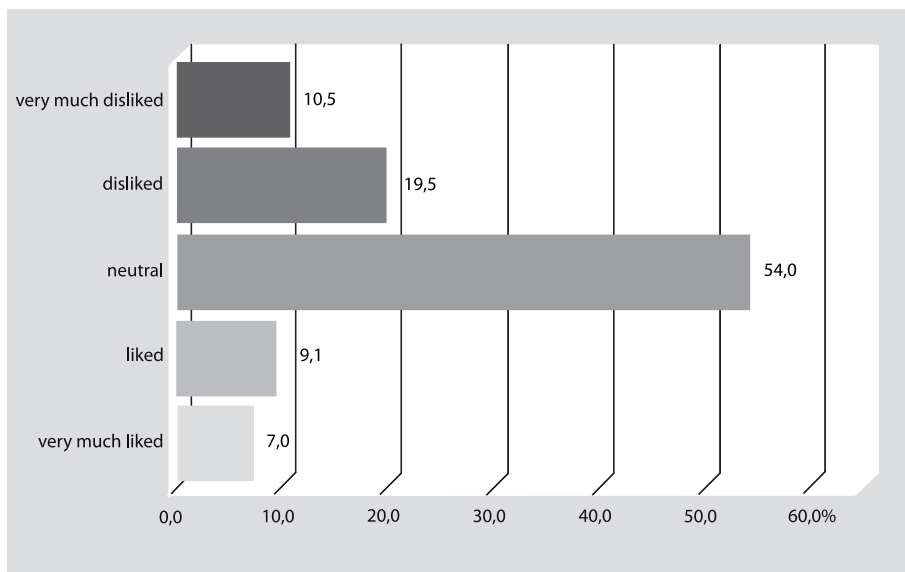
National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

7. How do you relate to Arabs?



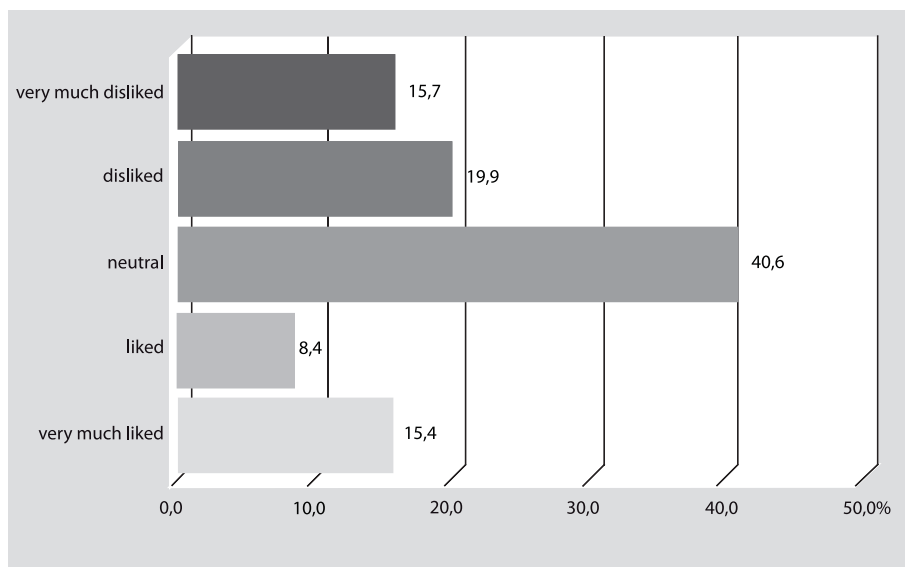
National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

8. How do you relate to Chinese?



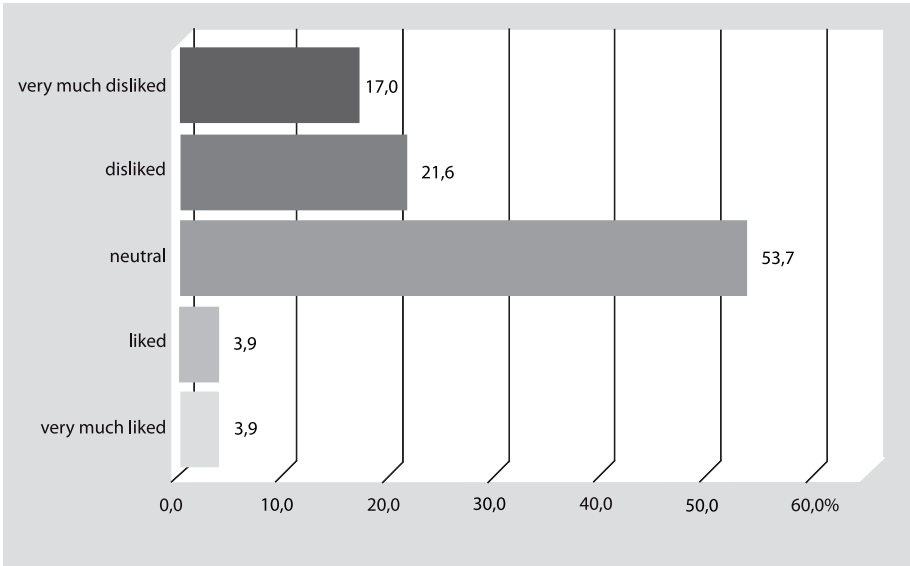
National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

9. How do you relate to Roma?



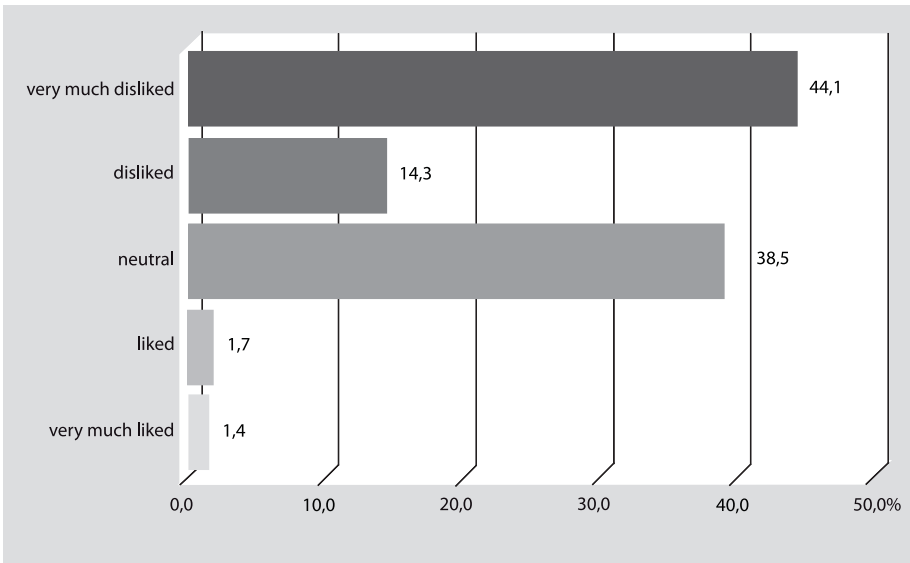
National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

10. How do you relate to people belonging to other religions than yours, and members of sects?



National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

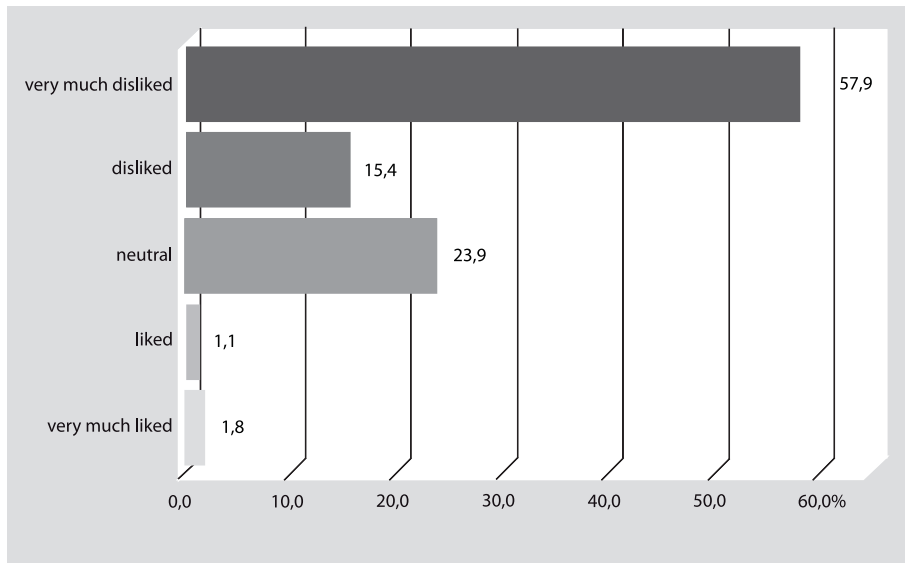
11. How do you relate to homosexuals?



National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

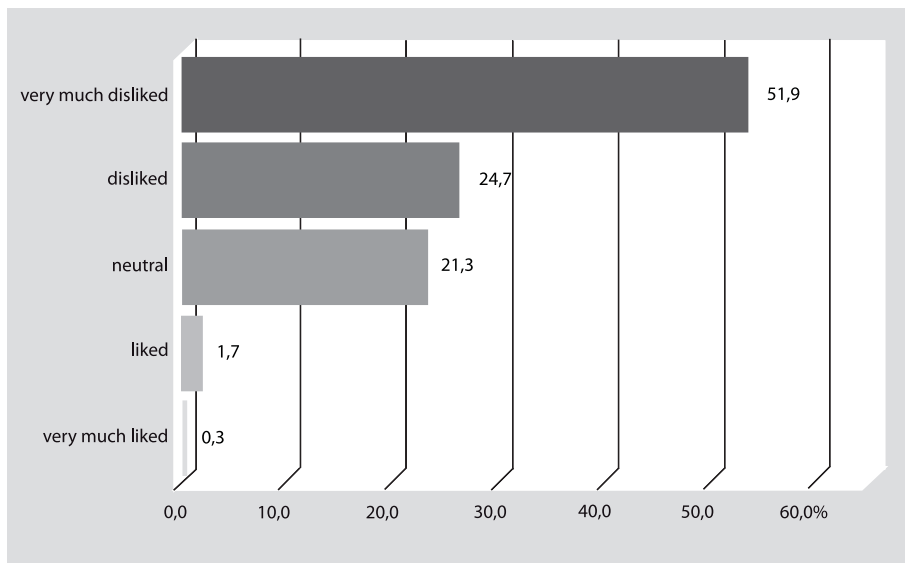


12. How do you relate to skinheads?



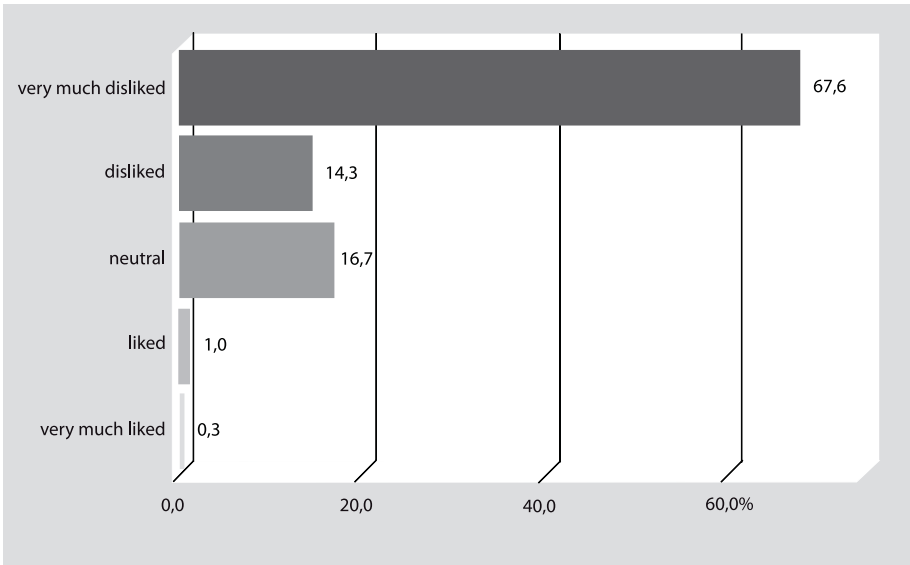
National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

13. How do you relate to alcoholics?



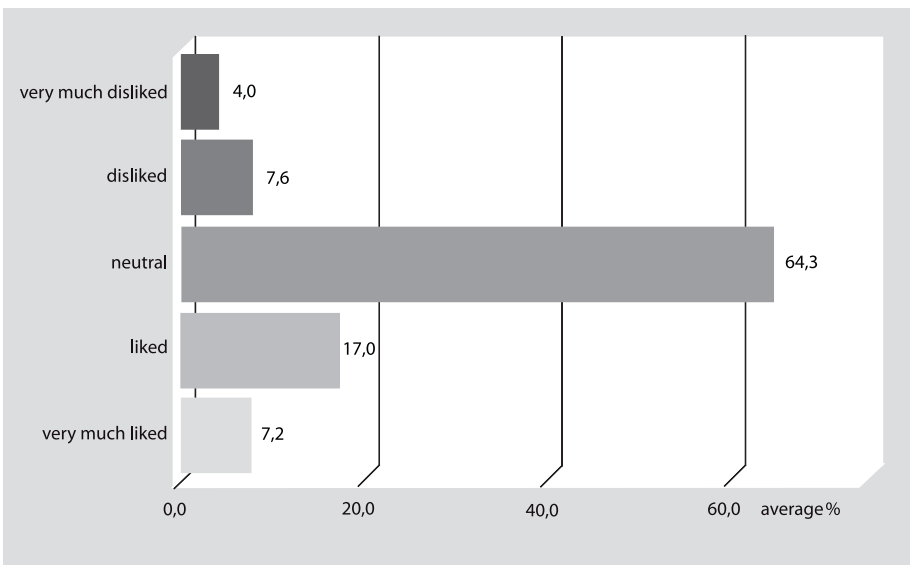
National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

## 14. How do you relate to drug-users?



National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

## 15. How do you relate to successful entrepreneurs?

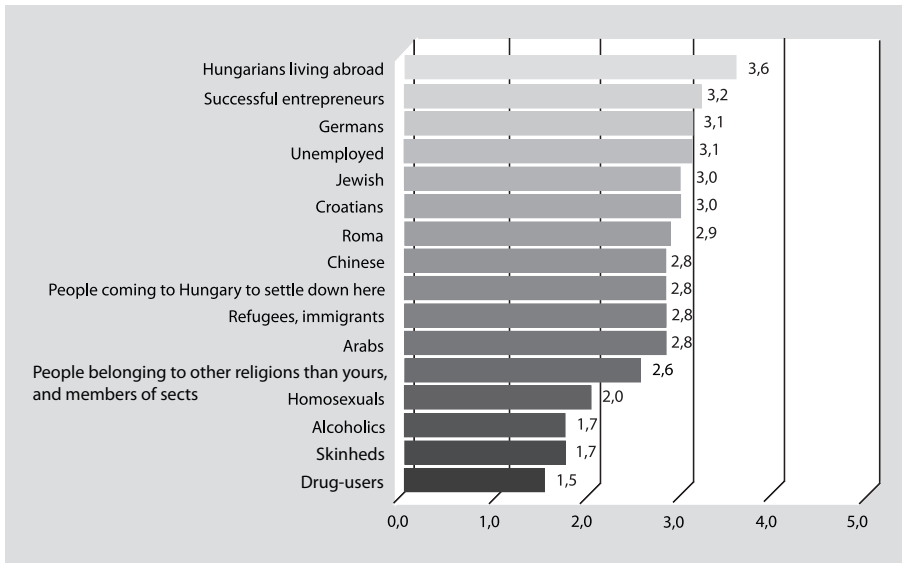


National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

Skinheads and Roma were situated in the opposite poles of the examined space, because skinheads were rejected by everyone, while Roma people were liked by everyone. There was a large set of liked groups, including successful entrepreneurs, Hungarians living abroad, Germans and Croatians. On the other side there were drug-users, alcoholics and homosexuals. Their present situation is owing to their own fault or to their social exclusion. They were perceived with a uniform antipathy.

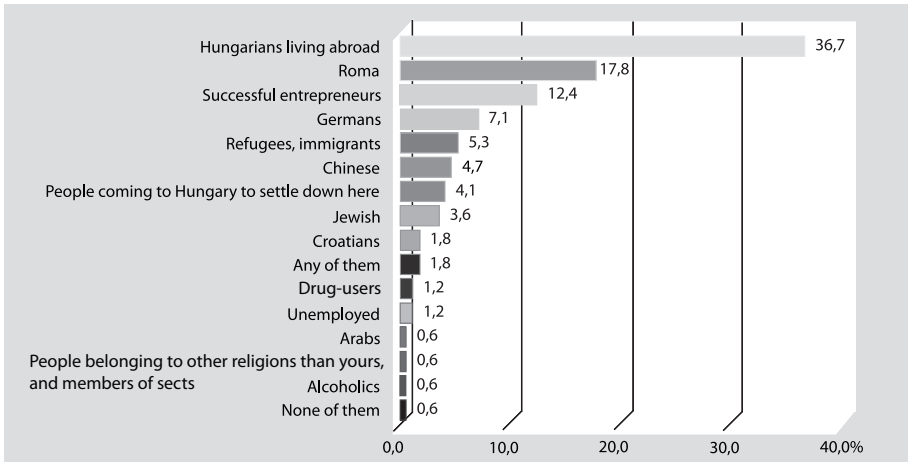
As part of the study we also asked the respondents, how close they would let members of different social groups be to them. The first set of questions focused on who one would like and who one would not like to neighbour. Most respondents would like to neighbour Hungarians living abroad, and would not like to have skinheads as neighbours. As a second best choice (17,8%) most respondents would like to have Romany neighbours, and as a third best option most respondents would like to neighbour successful entrepreneurs. The second most rejected group was also that of Roma (20,5%), though proportionally slightly more people can imagine neighbouring Roma, than who cannot tolerate Roma neighbours (17,8%). The third most rejected group is that of homosexuals (20,5%): no one chose them for neighbours. There is a high level rejection towards drug-users and alcoholics, too.

16. How do you relate to...? Acceptance – rejection  
Multidimensional scaling, ALSCAL model



National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

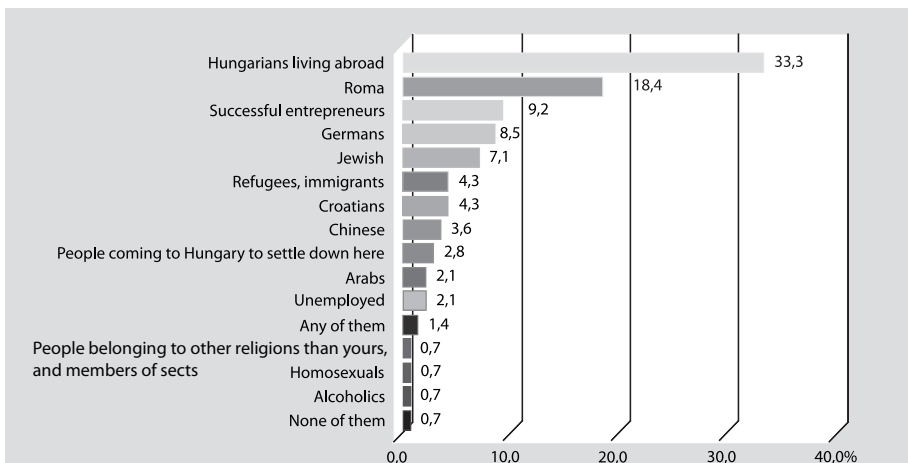
## 17. Whom would you like and whom wouldn't you like to have as neighbours?



National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

The next figure shows, which groups the respondents would like to have as friends, and which groups they would not like to have as friends at all. The rank of answers manifests great similarity with the previous one: respondents would like to have the most Hungarians living abroad and Roma as friends. The ranking of rejected groups is the following: respondents would like to have the least skinheads, homosexuals and Roma as friends.

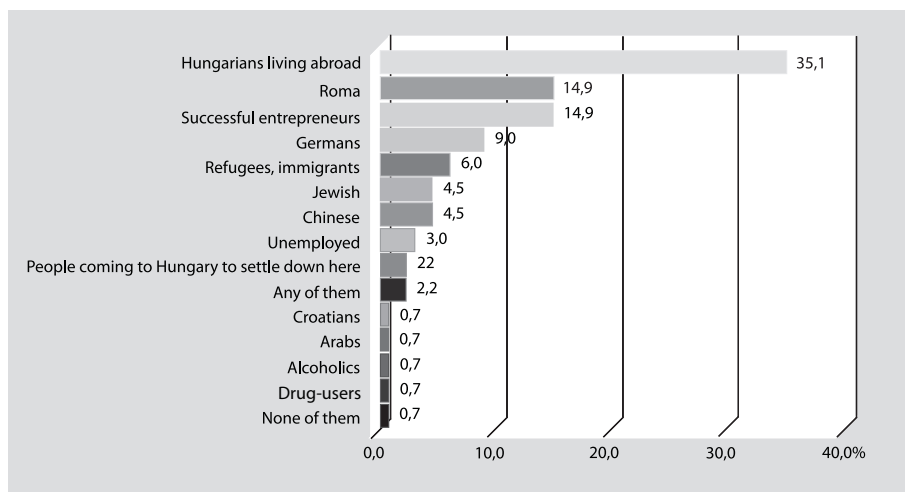
## 18. Whom would you and whom wouldn't you like to have as friends?



National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

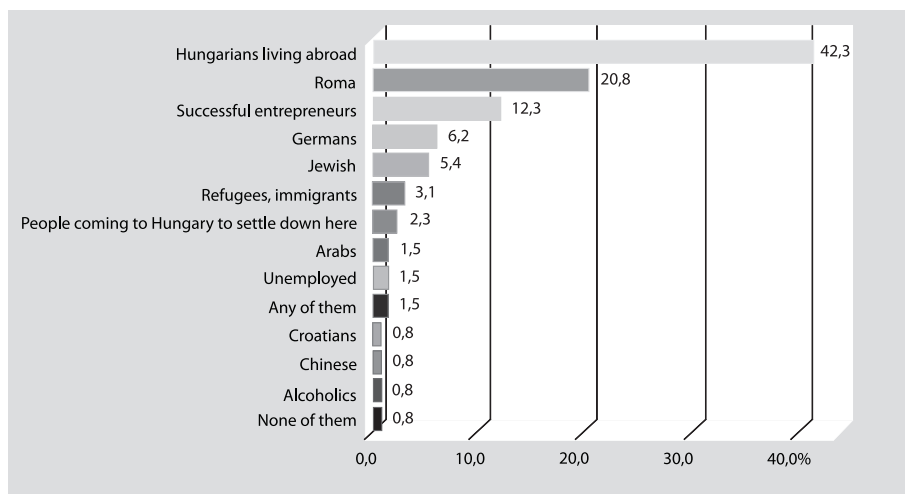
In comparison to the previous one, the question about colleagues shows the greatest difference in the ranking of the most rejected groups: respondents would like to have the least skinheads (29,4%), Roma (16,4%), homosexuals (14,1%) and alcoholics (12,4%) as colleagues.

19. Whom would you and whom wouldn't you like to have as colleagues?



National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

20. Whom would you and whom wouldn't you like to have as a member of your family?



National R&D Program 5/035/04; Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006.

According to this figure, 42,3% of respondents would like to have Hungarians living abroad as a family member, 20,8% of respondents can imagine also a Romany family member, and 12,3% of respondents would not mind to have a successful entrepreneur as a family member. Concerning this question, most categories received a very low percentage. 34,5% of respondents cannot imagine a skinhead family member under any circumstances, for 19,8% of respondents Roma family member would be unthinkable, and 17,5% of respondents wouldn't ever like to have a homosexual family member.

Our measurement supports, and in some cases relativizes, the assumption about the increasing differences between members of society according to their ethnicity, gender, occupation, age, settlement and income.

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