

# Half of Fidesz voters believe government did not vote for sanctions

Research summary

November 2022

The government’s campaign against sanctions is effective – this is one of the findings of Political Capital’s recent study examining societal opinions about the Russia-Ukraine war. The majority of Hungarians believe Europeans are more affected by the sanctions against Russia than Russians; and more people blame the sanctions for the increase in the global price of natural gas, even though they do not actually even apply to gas, than on the fact that Russia has intentionally reduced gas deliveries to Europe. That the government’s campaign is successful is also indicated by the fact that one out of two Fidesz voters agree with the false statement that “the government of Hungary did not vote for the sanctions.” Despite the government’s suggestions, however, far fewer people believe that the increase in food prices is connected to the sanctions.

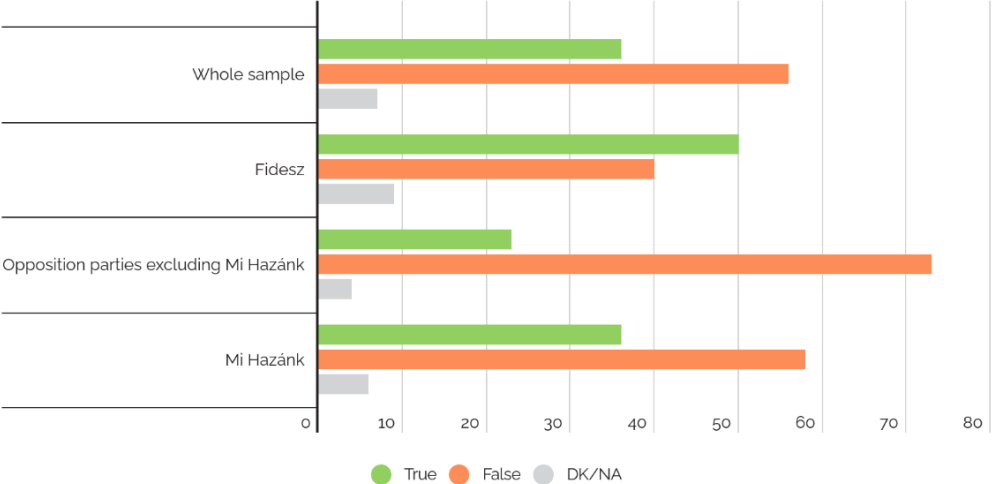
*The findings of the study are described in Hungarian in a series of pieces; the full text is available here: [https://politicalcapital.hu/hirek.php?article\\_read=1&article\\_id=3107](https://politicalcapital.hu/hirek.php?article_read=1&article_id=3107)*

*This summary is also available online here: [https://www.politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article\\_read=1&article\\_id=3120](https://www.politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article_read=1&article_id=3120)*

### Awareness of the sanctions

Calling its forceful campaign a “national consultation,” the Orbán government is working to hide the fact that it has voted for each of the eight EU sanctions packages targeting Russia to date. Billboards depicting bombs state that the **sanctions** are ruining Hungary, resulting in **36 percent of Hungarians believing that Hungary never voted for these measures**. Although the breakdown by party preference shows that they were successful primarily as far as pro-government voters are concerned in covering up reality, they have also managed to confuse a significant number of opposition voters. Fifty percent of Fidesz voters, 36 percent of extreme-right Our Homeland voters and 23 percent of those voting for other opposition parties (hereinafter: opposition parties) do not realize that the government, in fact, did vote for the EU sanctions.

The Hungarian government did not vote for sanctions  
 Assessment of the statement in the main party preference groups, in percent

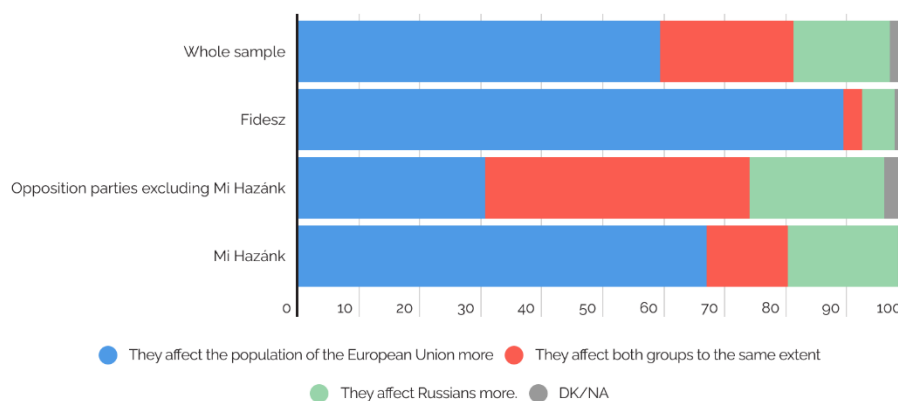


## What is the result of sanctions, and what is not?

Using every channel at its disposal, the government emphasizes that “mistaken Brussels sanctions” are to blame for the current economic situation making Hungarians’ lives more difficult. Our study shows that the majority of Hungarians did receive the message: **59 percent believe the sanctions affect European people to a greater extent than Russians**. The perception of Fidesz voters reflects the governmental narrative essentially seamlessly (89 percent), while opposition party supporters are far more divided in this question.

### Assessment of the effect of the sanctions against Russia

Distribution of answers in the main party preference groups, in percent. Survey question: *Hungarians have different opinions about whether the sanctions against Russia affect Russians more or the population of the European Union more. Please tell me what you think of this question.*



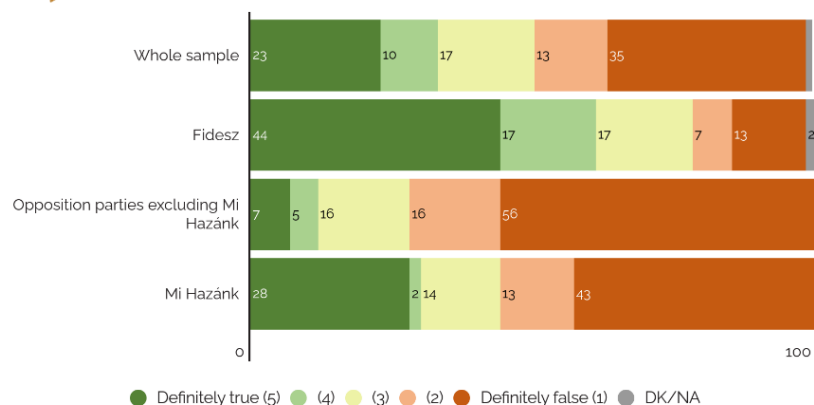
One key element of the government's reasoning is that high inflation, including runaway energy prices, is the result of mistaken sanctions. The message of “sanctions inflation,” it seems, has been heard by only a part of the population, however: **only one out of three Hungarians blame the high prices of food on the sanctions policy. The majority (53 percent), however, share the government’s narrative as far as the rising global market price of natural gas is concerned.**

### Assessment of statements regarding sanctions

1

*The increase in food prices in Hungary is primarily the result of sanctions against Russia.*

Distribution of answers in the main party preference groups, in percent.

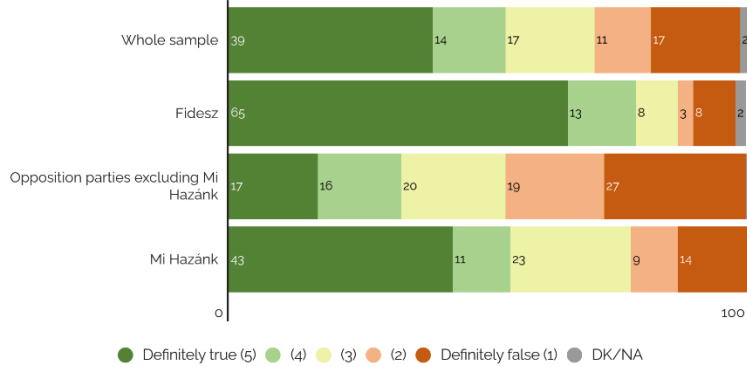


### Assessment of statements regarding sanctions

2

*The increase in the global market price of natural gas is primarily the result of sanctions against Russia.*

Distribution of answers in the main party preference groups, in percent.

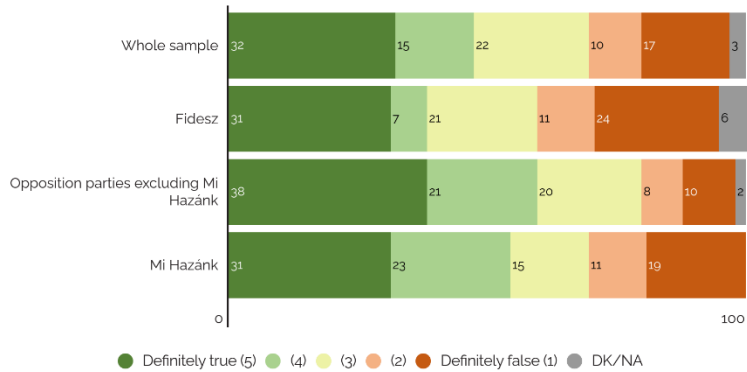


### Assessment of statements regarding sanctions

3

*The increase in the global market price of natural gas is primarily the result of Russians intentionally and significantly cutting back gas deliveries.*

Distribution of answers in the main party preference groups, in percent.

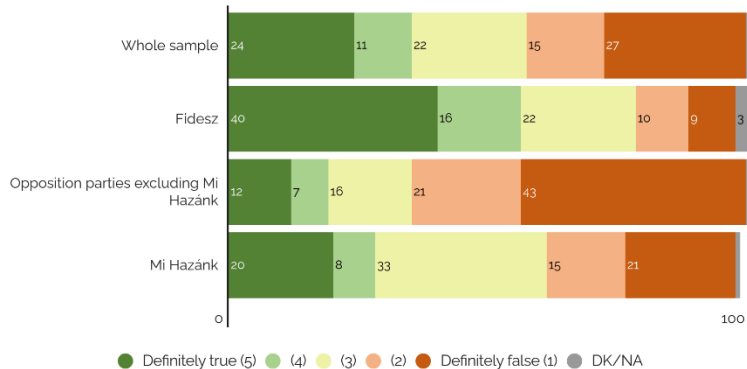


### Assessment of statements regarding sanctions

4

*If the EU were to terminate the sanctions against Russia, the global market price of natural gas would quickly return to the pre-war level.*

Distribution of answers in the main party preference groups, in percent.

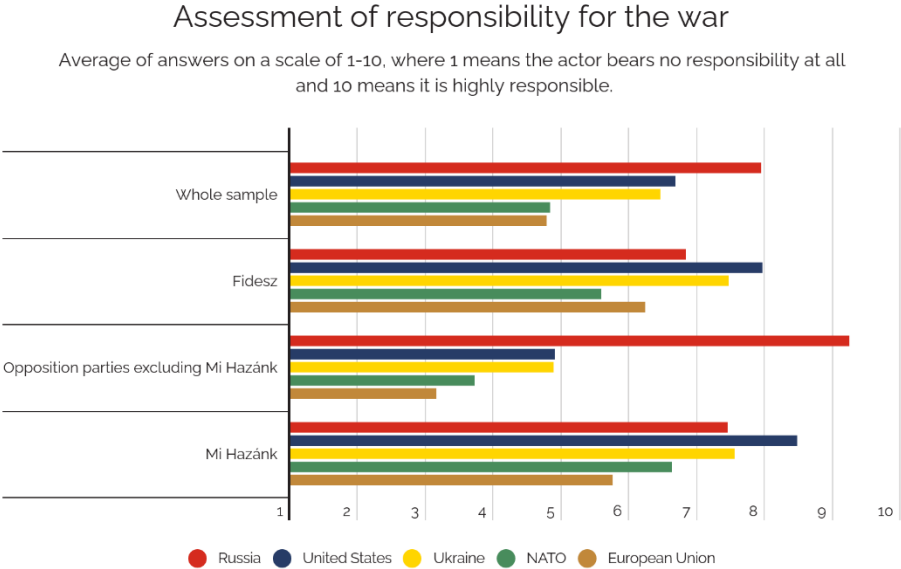


The global market price of natural gas had started to increase well before the war already, in the spring of 2021, primarily because Gazprom cut back the quantity of gas delivered to Europe. Russian leaders resorted to the same tool in a more intensive fashion following the outbreak of the war. The relative majority of respondents (47 percent) agree with this explanation, while 27 percent believe it is false.

This was, by the way, the only question in which there was something of an agreement between the pro-government and opposition camps, likely not independent of the fact that this topic does not feature prominently in the government’s communications.

## Responsibility for the war

In terms of responsibility for the war, among all respondents, Russia was cited as being most responsible for the armed conflict, although party preferences played an important role in respondents’ answers. **Among Fidesz voters, Russia – which had launched the military attack – was only in third place in an imaginary rank-order of those responsible, trailing behind the United States and Ukraine.** On the other hand, **opposition party sympathizers – without Our Homeland supporters – believe Russia is, by far, the most to blame for the conflict.**



Based on a comparison of the scores given to the various countries separately, of the two sides involved in the war, 45 percent said Russia is more to blame than Ukraine. Twenty-nine percent said both countries are equally to blame, and 23 percent said the side suffering the attack shoulders more of the responsibility.

## Opinion of the annexation of the four Ukrainian regions

The effectiveness of the government’s communication campaign is highlighted by the fact that voters’ opinions are less predictable in issues which receive less attention. Gergely Gulyás, the Minister in charge of the Office of the Prime Minister, dutifully announced at a Government Information session in late September 2022 that pursuant to the joint EU position, the government does not recognize the results of the referendum held in the four occupied Ukrainian regions, thus rejecting Putin’s takeover of Ukrainian territories. Subsequently, however, the government did not conduct any “information campaign” about the matter, choosing instead to essentially ignore it.

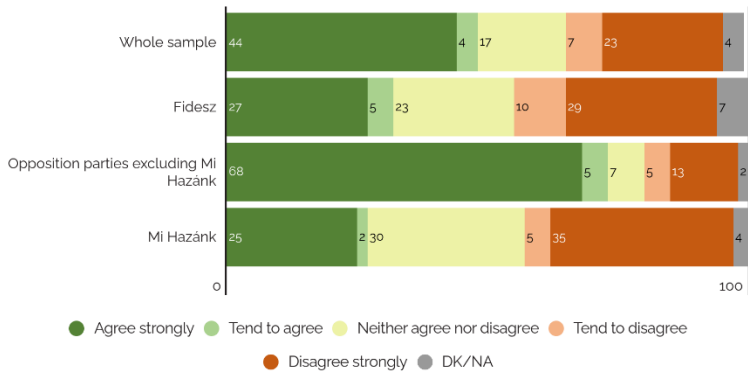
Unlike in the case of the EU sanctions, the government did not wish to tell Hungarians what they should think as far as territorial occupation is concerned. As a result, Hungarians – including a significant percent of pro-government voters – are today of the opinion which would stem logically from the government’s very much visible communications.

Essentially, the data show that **30 percent of those familiar with Russia’s actions (3 out of 4 respondents) do not agree with the statement that Hungary should not recognize the annexation of these territories to Russia.** From opposition and Fidesz voters it is precisely the latter group who were less likely to share the government’s official position: the vast majority (73 percent) of opposition voters agreed with the rejection of the annexation, but only 32 percent of pro-government voters felt the same way. (We did not indicate the results obtained among Our Homeland voters in this case, since because of narrowing the question down to those who were familiar with the matter, the number of data points was too low in their case.)

**Opinion of the annexation of the four Ukrainian regions**

**1** *Hungary should not recognize that the four regions in Eastern Ukraine are a part of Russia.*

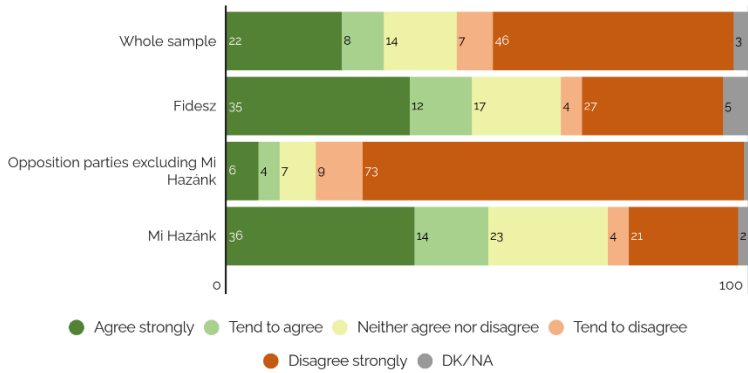
Distribution of answers of those familiar with Russia’s actions (3 out of 4 respondents), in the main party preference groups, in percent.



**Opinion of the annexation of the four Ukrainian regions**

**2** *The four Ukrainian regions were annexed legally, because local residents made their decision about it in a referendum.*

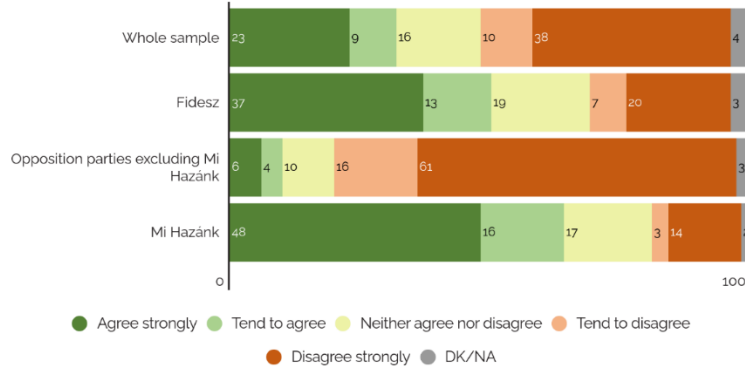
Distribution of answers of those familiar with Russia’s actions (3 out of 4 respondents), in the main party preference groups, in percent.



## Opinion of the annexation of the four Ukrainian regions

**3** *The four Ukrainian regions were annexed legally, because the overwhelming majority of local residents are ethnically Russian.*

Distribution of answers of those familiar with Russia's actions (3 out of 4 respondents), in the main party preference groups, in percent.



## The road to peace

Naturally, everyone wishes to see the war come to an end and a peace agreement be reached as soon as possible; we therefore did not include a question about this in the survey. We did, however, ask respondents about what sacrifices the various sides should make in the interest of peace. Those who believe Russia's aggression was entirely unlawful say Russia must withdraw its troops, and the pre-war borders of Ukraine must be restored – this is the only way to peace. Forty-six percent of Hungarians agree with this statement, which is only a relative majority. Thirty percent hold an opposite opinion, and an additional 20 percent agreed with a neutral opinion somewhere in the middle.

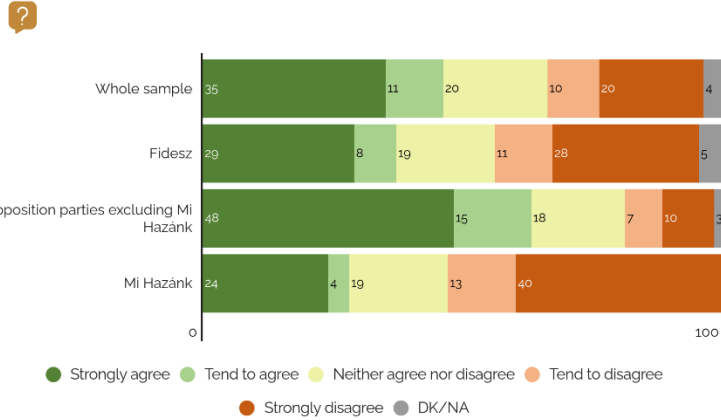
The narrative which prioritizes a peace agreement above all else may include Ukraine having to make sacrifices, essentially ceding some of its territory to Russia. The absolute majority of Hungarians – 58 percent – agreed with this, and only a far smaller number – 27 percent – were of the opposite opinion.

### Statements connected to a peace treaty

1

*Peace will only be achieved if the Russian troops leave Ukraine and Ukraine is able to retain its pre-war territory.*

Distribution of answers in the main party preference groups, in percent.

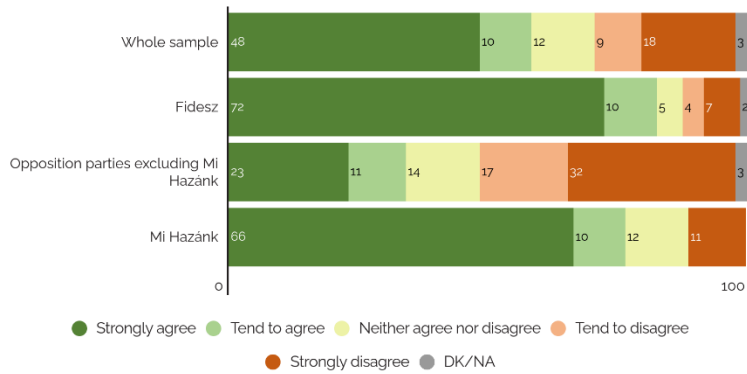


### Statements connected to a peace treaty

2

*A peace agreement must be concluded, even if it means that Ukraine must cede territory to Russia.*

Distribution of answers in the main party preference groups, in percent.

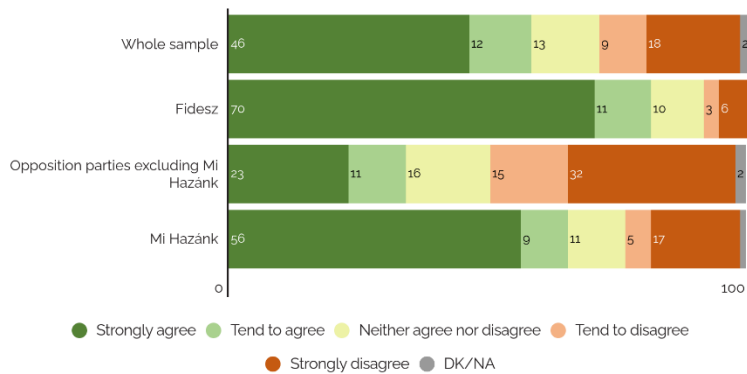


### Statements connected to a peace treaty

3

*Ukraine will inevitably be defeated, so a peace agreement must be concluded as soon as possible. This is also the interest of the Ukrainian people.*

Distribution of answers in the main party preference groups, in percent.





The number of those who agreed with both statements was relatively high, 19 percent. This contradiction may be due in part to the notion that the desire for a peace agreement strongly overwrites the rational response provided to the other question. This also shows the extent to which framing is able to influence personal positions in a particular question.

Disinformation narratives generally suggest that Russia will surely win the war, and thus urge a conclusion of the conflict from this position, to reduce the number of casualties. The majority of respondents (58 percent) agreed with this reasoning. In other words, even though the evolution of the war does not necessarily indicate this, **the majority of Hungarians believe it is inevitable for Ukraine to lose the war, thus making it urgent to reach a peace agreement as soon as possible, in order to protect the population of the country.**

The various party preference groups see different roads to peace. Pro-government and Our Homeland sympathizers tend to support a scenario less favorable to Ukraine, while opposition voters tend to focus more on the interests of the party suffering the attack.

## Methodology

Data for the representative public opinion poll was collected by Medián between October 15 and 21, 2022, with telephone calls to 1002 individuals.

The opposition is comprised of several parties, each enjoying the support of only a few percent. As a result, their supporters provided only a low number of data points in the entire survey sample, which does not make it possible to draw appropriately dependable generalizations about the results obtained in these groups. We therefore chose to treat the supporters of the opposition parties as a bloc. The exceptions are the voters of Our Homeland, whom we examined separately from other opposition voters. In part because the position of the extreme right party vis-à-vis the war differs from that of the other opposition parties in a number of ways, and in part because this is also confirmed by the answers obtained in the sample: while we found little actual difference in the responses provided to the questions by the sympathizers of the various other opposition parties, we did encounter marked differences in the majority of the answers provided by Our Homeland voters. The unweighted number of data points in the sample of the three party preference groups is as follows (in other words, the number of individuals queried): Fidesz-KDNP: 382 individuals, Our Homeland: 64 individuals, opposition parties without Our Homeland: 309 individuals. Within the latter group (but not in the entire sample), the breakdown of the various parties was as follows: Democratic Coalition (32%), Hungarian Two-Tailed Dog Party (20%), Momentum (18%), Everybody's Hungary Movement (7%), Jobbik (6%), LMP (5%), Hungarian Socialist Party (4%), On the People's Side (4%), Dialogue (3%).

This study was supported by the National Endowment for Democracy.

