

FGM prevalence in Hungary – estimation¹

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Migration to Hungary was practically non-existent before 1988. The country only re-entered the international migration flows after the political and economic changes following 1989. Since that time, Hungary has been acting partly as a transit, and partly as a target area of international migration. Throughout the period, the most significant group of foreigners settling in the country has arrived from neighbouring countries, most of them ethnic Hungarians. However, a significant proportion of them were naturalised and thus fall out of statistics on migrant populations. The second smaller but important group was comprised of people from Asian countries, mostly from China and Vietnam. From time to time, waves of migrants from other areas, e.g. Africa, or Afghanistan etc. have also reached the country. But these only happened on a lower scale, and usually resulted only in temporary stays, since for the latter groups Hungary typically serves as a transit country. Since the end of the 90s, linked to Hungary's EU accession and economic development, the rate of international migration has begun to increase, and the composition of immigrants has changed, resulting from a growing number of citizens who moved to Hungary from Western European countries and North America.³

The proportion of migrants in Hungary is low in international comparison. According to data of the last census (2001)⁴ 3% of the population were foreign born. At the end of 2010 the total number of immigrants, settlers and foreign nationals who stayed over 3 months in Hungary was 216,084 - according to latest statistics of the Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) of the Ministry of Interior -, which represents a bit over 2% of the population. Due to the relatively recent reintegration of the country into international migration no significant second generation migrant population lives in the country.

According to official statistics referring to foreigners with a residence permit, we can say that the majority of migrants living in Hungary are from neighbouring countries. It is impossible to make an accurate estimation, but the majority of them are supposed to be ethnic Hungarians. Compared to the international scene, this is a special situation, since ethnic Hungarians constitute a non-visible minority with basically the same cultural background as the native population (including command of language). Approximately 14 per cent of immigrants, settlers and foreign nationals, approx. 20.000

¹ The present prevalence study was initiated by MONA Foundation for the Women of Hungary (*MONA – Magyarországi Női Alapítvány*) in the framework of the END FGM European Campaign, which is led by Amnesty International Ireland and carried out in cooperation with European non-governmental organizations that work on the prevention and abandonment of FGM. The manuscript was closed on the 7th of November, 2012.

² Nóra Kassa of MONA contributed to the study with the analysis of data obtained from the Office of Immigration and Nationality (*Bevándorlási és Állampolgársági Hivatal*).

³ Hegedűs, R., Bumberák, M., Kóródi, M., Kőszeghy, L., Tomay, K., Váradi, L. and Zakariás, I. (2007) Experiment in newcomer integration, WP5 thematic studies. Presence and impact of foreigners in the 8th District of Budapest, manuscript, DemNet Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights (*DemNet Demokratikus Jogok Fejlesztéséért Alapítvány*).

⁴ Relevant data of the census conducted in 2011 are not available yet.

persons arrived from China. A similar magnitude of persons resides in Hungary with an EEA residence permit. Foreigners from neighbouring countries, China and the EEA constitute the vast majority of the total foreign population of Hungary. The number of persons from other areas is significantly lower; the number of migrants from African countries (including countries where FGM is prevalent) can be estimated at 2-3 thousand.

The estimation below on the number of women possibly affected by FGM is based on the estimated number of women from countries where FGM is prevalent,

- residing in Hungary with residence permit;⁵
- those who have obtained a refugee status in the past ten years;⁶
- those who have obtained temporarily protected status (*'oltalmazott', 'befogadott'*);⁷
- currently residing in one of the reception centres operated by OIN or the alien policing detention centres (*'őrzött szállás'*) operated by the National Police.⁸

As to the prevalence of FGM among women arriving from affected countries, we used the WHO estimation on FGM prevalence.⁹ On the prevalence of FGM among Iraqi Kurds, we used the estimation of the Association for Crisis Assistance and Development Co-operation (WADI) cited in the report of Human Rights Watch report on FGM in Iraqi Kurdistan.¹⁰

No data are available regarding children (girls) born in Hungary with a migrant background from affected countries. African migrants tend to have more children than other migrant groups in Hungary, often in a mixed marriage between an African man (most African migrants present in Hungary are men) and a Hungarian woman.¹¹ No information is available on the number of children (girls) with a migrant background, possibly threatened by FGM. Such a threat may be somewhat

⁵ Data as of 31 December 2008, obtained in the framework of the research "Immigrants in Hungary" (*"Bevándorlók Magyarországon"*), financed by the European Integration Fund, conducted by Institute for Ethnic and National Minority Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (*Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Etnikai-nemzeti Kisebbségkutató Intézete*) and ICCR-Budapest. Data for immigration permits were not broken down by gender, we used a 20% estimation regarding the number of women in our calculation.

⁶ Data provided by the Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) for the purposes of the present material. Data for 2001 were not broken down by gender, we used a 20% estimation regarding the number of women in our calculation. The total number of persons living in Hungary as refugees from the affected countries could not be obtained.

⁷ Data provided by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (*Magyar Helsinki Bizottság*) for the purposes of the present paper. Data for minors were not broken down by gender, we used a 20% estimation for the proportion of females.

⁸ Data provided by the Office of Immigration and Nationality and the Békés county police for the purposes of the present material. Data for minors were not broken down by gender, we used a 20% estimation for the proportion of females.

⁹ On methodological considerations regarding such estimations: e.g. www.forwarduk.org.uk/download/9. Furthermore, as data broken down for age groups could not be obtained, we used the WHO/WADI estimation to the entire groups of women from the respective source countries.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch (2010) "They Took Me and Told Me Nothing" Female Genital Mutilation in Iraqi Kurdistan, <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/wrd0610webwcover.pdf>

¹¹ Kováts, A, Rónai, G (eds) (2009) *Bevándorló* Budapest, http://www.kultours.hu/images/stories/galeriak/web_book/bevandorlo_bp_web2.pdf

limited by the fact that according to NGO information¹² victims suffer the procedure before migration, in Hungary the practice is not exercised, according to our knowledge.

We estimate the number of migrant women affected by FGM in Hungary is between 170 and 350. For our calculation we used the data (by sex and origin country) provided by OIN in 2011 and WHO's FGM prevalence data by country.

We used the following method: first, we summed up the number of those women who came from the same origin country and reside in Hungary with different types of permits, then, using the FGM-prevalence data of the countries of origin, we calculated the number of FGM-affected women. By adding up the FGM-affected women from different origin countries, we got 263 persons. We have to add 70 women recognized as refugees, but we have to note that we have no data about how many of them are actually residing in Hungary. According to data from the autumn of 2011, there are 7-8 women living in guarded accommodation who have undergone FGM and we also have to take into account 1-5 hosted or protected persons.

We estimate that 350 could be the maximum number of girls and women who have been affected by FGM, but we have to admit we overestimated this number because:

1. Probably some of these women do not reside in Hungary any more.
2. Our estimation includes girls aged between 0-13, too, and among them the prevalence of FGM must be lower (But we have to admit they are also probably at risk of undergoing FGM in the future, so from that point of view they are also affected by FGM.)
3. We supposed that the prevalence of FGM among the migrant women was the same as among the female population of the country of origin, but presumably those ones who are able to migrate have a different status and it can have effect on the prevalence of FGM in this group.

We did not take into account the Iraqi Kurds because we have no data about the prevalence of FGM in this ethnic group. We defined the minimum of our estimation is 170, if the calculate with the WHO's data of 70 prevalence and if the 70 percent of the women found in statistics are actually residing in Hungary.

Though the number of affected women is low in international terms, and according to information provided by the OIN, FGM is rarely referred to as a reason for asylum applications,¹³ it cannot be said that the phenomenon is non-existent in the country. It is verified by the experiences of NGOs working with migrants such as Menedék – Association for Migrants, and the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, which tend to meet refugee women, especially from Eastern African countries, who underwent FGM.

Due to the uneven geographical distribution of migrants (in addition to places of institutional accommodation, most of them are concentrated in the most developed part of the country, the

¹² Menedék – Hungarian Association for Migrants (*Menedék – Migránsokat Segítő Egyesület*).

¹³ According to information from the OIN, "if the applicant is trustworthy regarding the threat of FGM, granting of refugee status may be well-founded under the Geneva convention due to gender-based persecution, if the conditions of recognition are present." Article 60 (2) b of the Act No. LXXX of 2007 on Asylum (*A menedéjgról szóló 2007. évi LXXX. törvény*),) explicitly refers to gender-based persecution as a valid ground for applying for asylum and the Justification of the Proposal of Asylum Act No T/2935 (*T/2935. számú törvényjavaslat a menedéjgról*) contained a specific reference to FGM as a form of gender-based persecution.

Central Hungarian region and especially in the capital, Budapest) **affected women are likely to be concentrated/overrepresented in some geographical locations**, namely in places of institutional accommodations and in the capital Budapest; especially in those areas of the capital where the proportion of African migrants is relatively higher (such as the 8th district). However, such a presumption needs to be verified by further research.