

---

## ECONOMICS

---

*Sociology*

Fónai, M., & Fedor, A. R. (2023). Phenomena of precarity among young graduates – Hungarian case study. *Economics and Sociology*, 16(2), 107-122. doi:10.14254/2071-789X.2023/16-2/7

### PHENOMENA OF PRECARITY AMONG YOUNG GRADUATES – HUNGARIAN CASE STUDY

#### Mihály Fónai

*University of Debrecen, Faculty of  
Health Sciences, Social Sciences  
Institute, Department of Sociology  
and Social Work, Health  
Sociological Scientific Coordination  
Center, Debrecen, Hungary  
E-mail:  
fonai.mihaly@arts.unideb.hu  
ORCID 0000-0003-1896-9883*

#### Anita R. Fedor

*University of Debrecen, Faculty of  
Health Sciences, Social Sciences  
Institute, Department of Sociology  
and Social Work, Health  
Sociological Scientific Coordination  
Center, Debrecen, Hungary  
E-mail: fedor.anita@etk.unideb.hu  
ORCID 0000-0002-7837-7006*

**ABSTRACT.** In our study we analyse the risk factors of precarity among young graduates. We aim to explore the characteristics that can turn young graduates towards precarity. The position of young graduates is better on the labor market than that of job seekers with lower qualification. Nevertheless, there are some risk factors that can also affect young graduates, such as the uncertainty on the labor market, and the chance and danger of falling into precarity. In this paper, different interpretations of and approaches to precarity are validated as a theoretical framework, taking into account the main theories dealing with the concept of precarity and with precarity as a class. We focus on young graduates as a group at risk of precarity, and thus also analyse the theories dealing with their situation. Our empirical investigation tests the claims of the main theories. For this purpose, we conduct a secondary analysis of the 2018 database of the Graduate Tracking System based on the responses of 15 102 recent graduates. Studies show that the risk of precariousness in Hungary is mainly shaped by the level of education and the post-graduation job. However, since no similar empirical analysis has been conducted for the country, our study is exploratory in nature, which gives it both its value in terms of novelty and its limitations.

*Received:* May, 2022

*1st Revision:* March, 2023

*Accepted:* June, 2023

DOI: 10.14254/2071-  
789X.2023/16-2/7

**JEL Classification:** A14, J82

**Keywords:** labour market insecurity, precariousness, young graduates, risk of precariousness

#### Introduction

In this paper, we analyse the characteristics of precariousness risk among recent graduates and the impact of the variables that influence it. Our aim is to identify the extent to which certain characteristics of the precariousness phenomenon are specific to the social group we are investigating (in the generally more favourable labour market situation), and how they determine the precariousness risk among them. Thus, we explore the concept of precarity, the characteristics of precarity as a potential class, and the main social groups that are precarious (Fuller & Vosko, 2008; LaVaque-Manty, 2009; Standing, 2011, 2014; McKay et al., 2012).

Precariousness is defined as social and labour market insecurity, manifested in unfavourable working conditions such as precarious short-term jobs, fixed-term contracts, low wages, etc. These characteristics, in addition to a lack of financial security, can lead to a general insecurity of existence, and possibly to labour market and social exclusion (LaVaque-Manty, 2009; Standing, 2011).

In our empirical analysis, we seek to determine the extent to which precariousness as a social and labour market situation is evident among young graduates in Hungary, and which main explanatory variables are most relevant for understanding this phenomenon. We examine the impact of socio-demographic variables (gender, parents' educational attainment, economic situation of the orientation family), institutional and individual characteristics of higher education (level of education and degree, student loans), and job characteristics on the risk of precariousness.

Our research questions are “How are socio-demographic variables associated with the prevalence of precarious characteristics among the recent graduates studied?”, “Can we identify higher education and institutional effects that increase the labour market precariousness of young graduates?”, “Does the managerial/subordinate position affect the risk of precariousness?”, and “Does a degree protect against labour market insecurity and the risk of precariousness?”.

Our results show that the type of job contract, the application of knowledge, the nature of the job (whether it requires a degree), the level of education and the hierarchical position in the workplace are associated with a higher risk of precariousness. Although socio-demographic variables (gender, parental education) have a significant effect on the risk of precariousness, the effect itself is weak.

Ultimately, we can also ask whether the precariousness of young graduates and recent graduates is not associated with a descent into precarity, since it is likely that young graduates tend to belong to the social classes defined by Standing as "salarariat" and "proficians", in which sense a degree does provide some protection (Standing, 2011, 2014, 2018).

## **1. The concept of precarity**

In their study, as indicated in the Introduction, we will primarily undertake an empirical test of the theoretical claims about precariation. Despite divergent approaches, the considerable theoretical literature on the subject has convincingly conceptualised several notions related to the phenomenon, and these are analysed. Similarly, theoretical issues and aspects have been operationalised in the literature, and these results have been considered in the design of our own research.

There has been considerable debate in the literature on the meaning of the concepts related to 'precarity' (Elios, 2018). The phenomenon has been analysed in social and labour market contexts, and the terms "precarity", "precariousness", "precariousness job, work", "precariousness employment", "standard, non-standard work" are widely used alongside the terms "precariousness", "precariousness job, work", "precariousness employment", "standard, non-standard work", which also point to differences in interpretation (Cranford, Vosko & Zukewich, 2003; Elios, 2018; Gauffin, 2020; Mikołajczak, 2021). Three possible contexts can be captured in analyses of precarity and precariate, with precariate being discussed as a political movement, as a cross-class experience, and as a social class (Standing, 2014:96-98). These categories are noticeably sometimes overlapping and contradictory.

The literature on precariousness recognises the phenomena and processes under study as specific to the period of capitalism, which is characterised as a turning point, and linked to its changes, one of the characteristics of which is the rise of precariousness. It has transformed

'welfare capitalism' and produced new social phenomena that researchers have described with the categories of 'marginality', 'informality', 'underclass' and 'exclusion' - the concepts and categories of precariat and precarisation are part of this set (Szépe, 2012, Szépe, 2016:59-60). The emergence of the precariat reflects the economic and social changes of capitalism in the twentieth century, the transformation of 'welfare capitalism', the welfare state, in the context of globalisation processes. The direction of change has been the rise of a neoliberal ideology and the public policies that have permeated it, placing the institution of the market at the centre of the operation and reproduction of society, and the diminishing role of the state, in parallel with the dismantling and transformation of previous institutions and structures (Szépe, 2012, 2016). These features become especially obvious in terms of the high share of the informal economy (Remeikiene & Gaspareniene, 2021). According to Standing, the global economy has been shaped over the last forty years by neoliberal economics, which, amplified by the digital revolution, has produced two interrelated phenomena: global rentier capitalism<sup>1</sup> and a global class structure in which the precariat is the new mass class (Standing, 2011).

However, two positions seem to emerge in the perception of Fordism and welfare capitalism, one is the scenario outlined by Standing (2011), the other is the view that precarious employment has existed in capitalist economies since the beginning of paid work, that these "precarities" were only seemingly overcome in the "golden age of capitalism" and that they have returned today (Motakef, 2019). A similar view is shared by Eliosa (2018:300-301), who argues that, from a conceptual point of view, to historicise precarious work in the history of global capitalism is to treat job stability as the exception and precarious work as the 'norm' of capitalism. The different waves of precarisation are likely to have been generated by international macroeconomic events (e.g. the capitalist crisis), influenced by global political dynamics (e.g. the bipolar Cold War order and its end), shaped by economic theory (e.g. Keynesianism vs. neoliberalism) and production models (e.g. Fordism vs. post-Fordism). The same view is shared by Neilson and Rossiter (2008): fordism should be seen as the exception and uncertainty as the norm. They see 'precariousness' not only as a condition of insecure workers, but also as a more general existential condition characterised by political subordination and economic exploitation (Neilson & Rossiter, 2008:54). This process has led to the emergence of 'flexible employment' (as analysed by Standing), which employers and governments have been involved in the design and creation of (Benach et al., 2014). As a hybrid of uncertainty, flexibility, and exploitation LaVaque-Manty speaks of the precariat. The exploitation of people living in precarious conditions can be characterized by a hybrid term, from the words „exploitation” and contemporary business jargon „flexibility”, which results in the concept of „flexploitation”. „Flexploitative” work is usually McJobs jobs, or more directly, „shit jobs”. These are: low-quality service jobs that are literally dirty, unpleasant, and dangerous jobs due to technological change and low social esteem and low pay (LaVaque-Manty, 2009:106).

However, uncertainty and temporariness do not only affect disadvantaged workers, for example by moving to a lower-ranking job after unemployment. „*Temporary job*” also carries risks, such as in short-term projects, or in long-term jobs where someone has to do the same few tasks over and over again, hardly means serious aspiration (Standing, 2011). Temporary job does not mean insecurity only with a satisfactory social environment. The other path of the precarious is *part-time employment*, a tricky euphemism that has become a feature of the third sector economy. Part-time workers find that they have to work more and more than expected, more than they are paid for, in addition, they have to do a lot of unpaid work so they could be

---

<sup>1</sup> A system where large corporations gain significant amounts of profit as a consequence of the ownership and control of assets, rather than from innovative, entrepreneurial use of economic resources (Pavanelli, 2020).

exploited even more (Standing, 2011: 15). In addition to insecurity, Standing also considers the presence or absence of forms of work-related security important, which became common among the working class after World War II. Areas of work-related security include labor market, employment, job, work, skill reproduction, income, and representation security (Standing, 2011: 10-11). It is clear that the lack of work-related „safety” increases insecurity and thus contributes to the emergence and spread of precarious phenomena.

Similar trends are also highlighted by the Budowski's. 'Insecurity' does not only characterise the structural situation of the 'poor', the 'marginalised' or the 'socially excluded', the 'lower classes', 'precarious well-being' can also refer to the affluent middle and upper classes, in this sense it is not only a labour market category (Budowski et al., 2010).

In defining 'precarious employment', Canadian authors also consider the specificities of standard employment and non-standard work, which in many ways differs from the European approach (Cranford, Vosko & Zukewich, 2003). Standard employment generally refers to a situation in which a worker has one employer, works full-time, year-round at the employer's premises, enjoys extensive statutory benefits and entitlements, and expects to be employed for an indefinite period. Standard employment is the model on which labour laws, legislation and policies, and trade union practices are based (Cranford, Vosko & Zukewich, 2003:6-7). Non-standard work focuses on any form of employment or arrangement that differs from the standard employment relationship. The result is a persistent dichotomy - standard versus non-standard, which does not paint an accurate picture of precarious employment.

Gauffin summarises the conceptualisation of precariousness as related to the precariousness of work (2020:2-3). 'Precarious employment' generally refers to the characteristics of the employment contract and employment relationship. The concept of 'precarious work', which clearly overlaps with precarious employment, can refer to the actual work performed and the risks that the worker bears in this activity. In referring to members of the precarious workforce, the term 'precarious workers' is not only used to describe individuals who do precarious work, however, it is also used to refer to the consequences of this type of work on other aspects of life. In contrast to the description of individual workers, the term 'precariat', made famous by Guy Standing (2011), refers to a collective or an emerging class. The concept of 'precarisation' can be used to describe the process of precarious employment becoming entrenched and central within a given labour market.

In our study, we define precariousness, most simply, as labour market insecurity, concentrated in factors such as precarious, short-term jobs, fixed-term contracts, low position in the labour market hierarchy, etc. (LaVaque-Manty, 2012; Standing, 2012), while accepting that precarity is a more general social phenomenon that goes beyond labour market insecurity.

## 2. The precariat as a class

One of the debates over the phenomenon and concept of precariousness is about the „class nature” of the precariat - some of the authors, including Standing, argue that despite all its heterogeneity, the precariat is class (“class-in-the-making but not class- for-itself”, 2011: 7). In his writings, Standing primarily outlines a new (global) class structure, paying relatively little attention to the theoretical issues of defining a „class”.

The “seven-class” model was somewhat modified in Standing’s further writings, so in his 2014 study he named the following classes: plutocracy-elite, proficians, salariat, core (working class), precariat, lumpen-precariat (Standing, 2014: 20, 2015: 4 -7, 2018: 4). In his analyzes, Standing highlights two interrelated class features of the emerging precariat. One is that the precariat is the “dangerous class” of the emerging class system that can advance social transformation. Standing does not accept that the precariat is a “dangerous class”, a “lumpen

proletariat”, which is wanted by global capitalism, encapsulating new norms of labour and work. It is also a transformative class, primarily because it is not used to secure stable work, and it does not accept that the answer to insecurity is more work and jobs (Standing 2018: 89).

Szépe (2016:134-135) summarizes Standing’s reflection in the literature on the precariat as a class. One of his claims, based on a literature review, is that when Standing refers to the precariate as a class in itself, his argument is too Eurocentric, uses too much Fordism as a point of reference, ultimately leading to a lack of ability to show global social and economic conditions affecting precariat formation. Another addition of Szépe (Standing for the class concept) is that the assumption of precariousness as a class for itself prompted several authors to reject the concept, and the whole model was rejected. According to Szépe, in the case of the precariat, the forces and conditions acting on it must also be at the center of the analysis, and the precariat must be interpreted primarily as a class defined by these relations, rather than as an existing movement (Szépe, 2016:135).

Candeias' (2007) view of the class characteristics of the precariat is very close to Standing's in that Candeias also outlines an emerging class situation. A more important difference is that Candeias sees the precariat as part of the working class, which lacks the conditions for the reproduction of its labour force (in contrast to the rest of the working class, which Standing calls the 'old' or 'core' working class). Candeias sees the precariat as a class fraction whose specificities stem from the elasticity of exploitation and the precariousness that results from the reduction of social services (Candeias, 2007:8).

The ambiguity of the relationship between the working class and the precariat is also contested in Standing's model by Bessant (2018), who argues that Standing narrows the notion of the working class to workers with long-term, stable, fixed hours and established pathways to promotion. Several of Standing's claims, such as the acceptance of the precariat as a class and the distinction between the working class and the precariat, are also contested by Bessant. The first contentious claim concerns the concept of 'precariousness' as an alternative to 'labour flexibility' - a point Bessant raises more on the grounds of conceptual ambiguity. A second problem is that precariousness is not a homogeneous group, i.e. not all persons in this category belong to a single or coherent socio-economically disadvantaged group. He also contests Standing's claim that the precariat is a new global class and not part of the working class (Bessant, 2018:3-5). He also contests Standing's concept of class in Eliosa (2018), seeing the division between the proletariat and the precariat as artificial. The precariat as a class concept is also seen as problematic by Frase (2013), mainly because it tries to group together too large and heterogeneous populations and excludes segments defined as working class.

Zsuzsa Ferge (2012) also sees the conceptual issues and the “class” nature of the precariat as uncertain. She argues that only a small fraction of the groups described by Standing would correspond to any old or new class concept. Standing uses a lot of Marxist thought, but without a Marxist definition. Ferge is uncertain that the (expected) changes strengthen the “class of oneself” character of the precariat, a divisive development is also possible (Ferge, 2012:122-123).

### **3. Forms and groups of precariat**

The definition of potential groups of the precariat is closely related to the definition of the precariat, and therefore the two approaches are not always distinguishable in the literature. This kind of "conflation" can be observed in the self-definitions of precariat movements, such as EuroMaday, as their slogans capture several essential features and groups of the precariat (see LaVaque-Manty, 2009).

In the following, we will first summarise the main claims of Standing's 2011 book on precariat groups. One of the major groups of the precariat is *women*. This is related to and a consequence of several things. One is a more general trend towards feminisation, linked to the increasing employment of women and the 'flexible' transformation of the labour market, with an increase in the proportion of flexible types of jobs. However, this has not been accompanied by improvements in women's earnings and working conditions, wage and social income inequalities have remained unequal, and the increase in women's labour market participation has coincided with an increase in precariousness and the spread of precarious employment (Standing, 2011). This is compounded by women's 'triple burden' of work, children and care for the home and elderly relatives (see R. Fedor & Fónai, 2017; R. Fedor, 2018, 2021a,b). These features of female employment are being manifested in developed and developing countries and seemed to be essential obstacles to decent standards of work ensuring (Mishchuk et al., 2021), especially in remuneration issues (Lauzadyte-Tutliene & Mikuciauskaite, 2022).

Standing not only deals with the reasons for the gender, and especially women, being placed in the precarious, he writes even more about *young people* than about one group of the precariat. In his opinion, this is linked to several factors, including a general phenomenon that young people have always entered the labour market in a precarious situation. We are now seeing young people getting temporary jobs and fixed-term contracts, which was tolerable as long as traditional family solidarity mitigated this. All this also harms young people's career prospects. Behind this, Standing points to a pervasive process of commodification and commercialisation alongside the transformation of the (global) economy and labour market. The next large group of the precariat is the *elderly*. The decision of the elderly to work after retirement may entail that they enter the precariat voluntarily and may also entail that they lose the support of their children. The fear of impoverishment and social exclusion is also behind the decision to take casual work.

*Members of ethnic minorities* are more likely to be in the precariat, especially as they are more likely to be unemployed. Members of ethnic minorities often traditionally reproduce the 'occupational niches' that have provided their livelihoods for generations. There is also a strong chance that *people with disabilities* ('disabled') will be drawn into the precariat. Job insecurity and disadvantage can create a cycle of insecurity around them. A significant proportion of the precariat are *welfare claimants* who, as a result of labour market flexibility and the privatisation of social policy, become impoverished, unemployed and at high risk of slipping into the lumpenprecariousness. The *criminalised* may also be a source of precariate, their living situation being inherently limited to the precariat. The largest hinterland of precarity is *migrants*, who are victims of precarity while becoming 'imaginary villains' by reducing the wages and corporate benefits of low-wage workers.

There is a broad consensus in the literature and in public policy analysis on the main groups of the precariat, with authors defining the main groups in similar terms (Fuller & Vosko, 2008; McKay et al., 2012). In their expert report, McKay et al. (2012) identify the following forms of employment characterised by labour market precariousness: fixed-term (temporary) contracts, part-time work, bogus self-employment, temporary agency work, sub-contracted and out-sourced work, undeclared, informal and irregular work, seasonal work, posted work. These types of work are also included in the European Parliament's 2016 report, and compared to the 2012 report, it adds Zero hours contracts/on-call work, Internships, and Forced labour. The analyses and reports of the European Union institutions operationalise 'precarious work' in a way that is tangible for empirical research.

#### 4. Young people as a potential precarious group

It is generally accepted in the literature that young people are one of the groups of the precariat. Of particular relevance to our topic, research and statistics show that highly educated youth groups are also at risk of labour market precariousness. Within the general (European) picture, this is particularly true for young graduates in Southern European countries, in which the social history of Southern European countries, the specificities of the labour market and the 2008 crisis play a major role. Armano and Murgia (2015:7-8) argue directly that having a tertiary education is not a protective factor either, as graduates are at the highest risk of unemployment: in 2009, the number of unemployed tertiary graduates or graduates increased more (20%) than those with lower qualifications (9.2%). The most affected were the self-employed and 'self-employed/independent workers'. The transition from university to permanent employment is long, which worsens employment stability, and the transition is not favourable in terms of employment conditions and professional content (Papík, et al, 2022). For example, almost half of young graduates are in jobs that do not match their qualifications (44.9%), compared to 34.1% of the total workforce. This pressure does not only affect young people in Southern Europe, including graduates, but young Poles also find it difficult to find permanent jobs and therefore, they accept any job available, usually unrelated to their qualifications and of low quality, apprenticeships and traineeships are becoming longer and longer, and underpayment for the work of such young people is becoming a more common phenomenon (Polkowska, 2016: 1).

Based on a comparative analysis of the situation of young people in three countries, Lodovici & Semenza (2012:11-12) come to similar conclusions. Based on their comparative analysis, the authors conclude that youth employment is generally characterised by a high share of temporary contracts, low wages, undeclared work and unpaid overtime, which leads to a vulnerable situation in the labour market, to some extent irrespective of educational attainment. The transition period between school and jobs offering a stable income, career prospects and social protection is quite long in some European countries, even for the highly qualified. In Southern Europe, over-education among young people is high and educational attainment is no guarantee against unemployment and/or precarious employment, with young graduates having the highest rates of unemployment and temporary employment. In the UK, the main problems for highly skilled young workers are skills mismatches and over-qualification, rather than temporary work. Graduates find employment relatively quickly after graduation, but this is typically followed by a longer transition period until they find a good quality job that matches their qualifications. Often, programmes designed to address the situation are ineffective, for example the Spanish Youth Guarantee programme has failed to change the precarious employment situation of young people (Cabasés & Úbeda, 2021).

In view of this, our assumption that a degree alone is not a guarantee of a 'secure' labour market career is not exaggerated when we consider the situation of recent graduates in Hungary.

#### 5. Data and methods

The database analyzed in the study is the national (Hungarian) database created on the basis of the 2018 data collection of the "Graduate Tracking System". Since 2010, graduate careers have been pursued centrally in Hungary, coordinated by the Educational Authority and implemented with the participation of universities.<sup>2</sup> Within this framework, active students in

---

<sup>2</sup> „The study was conducted using data from the register of the Information System of Higher Education managed by the Educational Authority.”

Hungary and graduates are contacted with a unified questionnaire (graduates one and three years before the request). The data collection is done with the unified questionnaire under the coordination of the Education Authority and with the participation of the universities, the universities send the questionnaire to the e-mail addresses of the active and graduated students. One of the defining databases of higher education research in Hungary is the database created within the framework of the Graduate Tracking System. Active student and graduate questionnaires have multiple dimensions. These are parental, family social background, high school career, further education, and major and institution choice. In the case of active students, university life paths, academic performance, language skills and studies abroad, as well as working alongside studies, are also examined. Among the graduates, they examine the time (how long they were able to get a job), the way and area (in what sector and position they work). Data collection also covers the level of application of the knowledge acquired at the university, the match between the acquired qualification and the knowledge and qualifications required for the work performed, as well as job satisfaction (use of knowledge, income, and prestige).

In the framework of the graduate survey conducted in 2018, the examined population consisted of 112.801 people, of whom 15.102 people (the population, 13.4 percent) answered the on-line questionnaire. In the course of the research, those who graduated one or three years earlier were contacted, they were called “recent graduates” in the analysis, and in this study we use this and the term “young graduate” alternately. The database for this sample is analyzed below. Our method was statistical secondary analysis, for which we used the SPSS 26 software.

In the analysis, we created a dependent variable based on the *risk of precarity* relying on the Graduate Tracking System questionnaire. The index included questions related to job insecurity and the fit of knowledge applied to a specific job. The values of the variables involved were added together, and then the resulting variable was divided into three “*risk groups*”: high, medium and low risk groups. We hypothesized that the “risk groups” thus created as suitable variables are suitable for characterizing precarious groups. The results of the statistical analysis show that the dependent variable developed actually reflects the potential precarious groups of the sample, more precisely *the risk of entering the precariate*. The following independent variables were taken into account in the analysis: socio-demographic variables (gender, parents' education, economic situation of the orientation family), institutional and individual characteristics of higher education (level of education, full time and part time, student credit) and the job characteristics.

Since few empirical studies in Hungary have examined the phenomenon of precariousness, as we pointed out, *our study and analysis are exploratory and problem-solving*. Although the precariate itself has a significant theoretical literature, for the purpose of analysis, we disregard the application of hypotheses as a result of exploring and problem formulating.

## 6. Results and discussion

The first of our empirical results is an analysis of the underlying distribution of the original variables of the risk of precarity index.

Among the sample of young graduates, the highest proportion of young graduates in terms of their main labour market status was employed at the time of the survey (81.6%). This is a very high proportion, especially if we consider that only 2.1% of respondents were unemployed, a very low indicator - in any case, the low level of "precariousness" in terms of labour market status is a sign of the labour market value of the degree. There is a significant



share of full-time students (7.2%), representing those who have continued their studies after Ba/Bsc and those who have pursued a PhD after Ma/MSc. The share of self-employed is 3.6% and that of entrepreneurs is 1.5%, i.e. the share of self-employed and self-employed shortly after graduating from university is very low, but it is important to underline that these categories may have a high share of forced self-employment, which is clearly a precarious characteristic, but at the same time this indicator is very modest compared to other countries. Childcare benefits (which are extensive and of long duration in Hungary) are used by 3.3% of respondents and 0.7% are homemakers. If only labour market status were taken into account, the proportion of young Hungarian graduates at risk of being precarious would be low.

Labour market participation focuses on employment in relation to labour market status, whether the respondent is working. 89.4 percent of respondents were working at the time of the survey, a category that includes both employees and self-employed (see under labour market status). This is a very high indicator, but it does not provide information on the job itself, its nature or the type of employment, so it cannot be said that this high indicator represents an almost complete absence of precariousness among the young people surveyed. The proportion of those who have never worked is only 2.9%, and 7.7% of those who were not working at the time of the survey but already had a job.

The risk of being in precarious employment is better illustrated by the type of employment contract. For 84.8 percent of the respondents, the main employment relationship is permanent and indefinite, which is a high indicator. 12.8 per cent of respondents have a fixed-term employment relationship and 2.5 per cent of the sample have a casual or contract job. Based on the literature, it is likely that the latter two categories include those who are at high risk of becoming precarious (Fuller & Vosko, 2008; Standing, 2011; European Parliament, 2016; McKay et al., 2019). Although the risk of precarity appears to be low, as permanent contracts dominate the sample, almost one in six recent graduates (15.3%) are at high risk of precarity due to the type of contract, which is not a negligible proportion.

A predictor of the risk of precariousness may be the extent to which the professional knowledge and skills acquired during training are applied in the actual work performed (three variables are included in the questionnaire to measure this). Among respondents, this is distributed as follows: not at all used by 10.3%, used to a small extent by 17.7%, to a medium extent by 27.0%, to a large extent by 22.6% and fully used by 22.4%. It is likely that, as a result of their work, precarious traits will be more prevalent among those who do not use their acquired professional knowledge at all and use it little - they account for more than a quarter of respondents (28.0%), and only less than half of the sample (45%) use their acquired professional knowledge to a great extent. In addition to the extent to which knowledge is applied, the field of study in which the specific job is most suited to the specific field of work is at least as important. If we take this into account, we can already see a higher risk of precariousness due to the match between knowledge and the work done, or lack thereof. Only 17.9 percent of respondents indicated "own studies" as being necessary for the work they do. Most typically, they apply knowledge from "own and related" field of study (63.2%). The high risk of precariousness is shown by the fact that 13.2 percent of respondents apply knowledge from studies in "other fields" and 5.6 percent apply knowledge from studies in "any" field of study in their work. These indicators are similar to research findings on the application of knowledge (and over-skilling) of young graduates in other countries, but the situation of young Hungarian graduates is more similar to that of young workers in the UK and more favourable than that of young graduates in Southern Europe (Lodovici & Semenza, 2012).

An additional predictor of the risk of precariousness may be *the level of education required for the work performed*. The proportion of those who do work that requires a higher education is very low. A PhD degree would be required for the work done by 2.3 percent of

respondents and a graduate degree by 1.5 percent. The most typical is the congruence of the level of education (qualification) of the respondents and the qualification required for the work performed, it is probable that precarious features prevail in their case (at least in terms of the level of education). However, 13.1 per cent of those surveyed report that the work they do does not require a tertiary education - they are more likely to be in the precarious. The original variables of the risk of precarity index are predictive in nature and function as potential predictors of precarity. Overall, it can be stated that among the analyzed predictive variables, primarily the type of employment contract, the application of the acquired professional knowledge and the level of education required for the job represent a higher precarious risk, which may also lead to actual entry into the precarious.

The risk of precarity index, as presented in the methodology chapter, was constructed from the variables analyzed here, by adding the values of the variables, and based on this, we created three groups: based on high, medium, and low risk of precariousness. The distribution of the young graduates interviewed in the three groups is as follows (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of young graduates based on the risk of precariousness

	Frequency	Percent
<b>High risk</b>	903	7.1
<b>Medium risk</b>	7576	59.3
<b>Low risk</b>	4298	33.6
<b>Total</b>	12777	100.0

Source: *The Information System of Higher Education, own calculation*

The largest group of young graduates are those at medium risk of precarity. Their share is very high, which confirms the general claims in the literature about the precarious situation of young people, as a medium risk can turn into a high risk in the presence of unfavourable labour market developments. The high risk of precariousness affects a small group of young graduates, with rates significantly lower than those reported in the literature (Candeias, 2007; Sík & Szeidl, 2016; Szépe, 2016), it should be emphasised, however, that the data in the literature refer to the total precarious population. In an analysis empirically testing the precariat thesis, Sík and Szeidl identified and operationalised the precariat as a labour market group, based on a trials version of labour market segmentation theory. On the basis of a secondary analysis of two databases, they formulated that 12 and 20 percent of Hungarian workers can be considered as part of the precariat (Sík & Szeidl, 2016: 25). Comparing the results of Hungarian researchers with those of other authors, we can see that according to Standing, it can be assumed that one quarter of the adult population can be classified as precariat (cited in Szépe, 2016). Candeias estimates that nearly 40 per cent of the German workforce works in conditions that are affected by some dimension of precariousness (Candeias, 2007: 8).

It is also important to stress that the low risk of precarity is found in only one third of respondents. Since the index cumulates possible precariousness characteristics, responding recent graduates may have higher scores in different areas and combinations of the risk of precarity index, which implies that the proportion of the most prevalent medium risk of precarity is high, which raises caution about the low indicator of detected "high risk of precarity".

In the following, we analyze the main characteristics of the three risk groups of precariousness, along with the independent variables involved in the research. These are the *socio-demographic variables* (gender, parents' educational attainment, economic situation of the orientation family), *institutional and individual characteristics of higher education* (level of education and full-time and part-time education, student loans) and regarding *work*

*characteristics the job position.* All of these show a significant correlation (Chi square test), but based on the value of Cramer V, the strength of the association is very low, except for the level of training and job placement.

In the case of socio-demographic variables, there are significant differences between women and men ( $p = 0.000$ , Cramer's V value = 0.061). There is no gender difference in the low risk of precariousness (women: 33.9%, men: 33.3%). The differences are observed for medium risk (women: 57.8%, men: 61.4%) and high risk (women: 8.3%, men: 5.3%), i.e. young women graduates are more affected by precariousness than men, this corresponds to the statements in the literature (Standing, 2011; R. Fedor & Fónai, 2017).

Parents' educational attainment also has a significant effect on the risk of precariousness. However, the strength of the relationship was weak (maternal education,  $p = 0.000$ , Cramer's V = 0.038, paternal education,  $p = 0.000$ , Cramer's V = 0.037). The effect is almost linear, i.e., lower educational attainment of parents is associated with a higher risk of precariousness. The effect of the financial situation of the respondents' family of orientation on the risk of precariousness is similar, i.e. the worse economic situation of the family (at the age of 14) rather increases the risk of precariousness ( $p = 0.020$ , Cramer's V = 0.027).

Among the *institutional and individual characteristics of higher education*, the level of training has the greatest impact on the risk of precariousness. The effect of the full-time/part-time training is significant ( $p = 0.000$ , Cramer's V = 0.057). However, the results are surprising in many ways, as they show that part-time students are less affected by the risk of precariousness. High risk affects 7.8 percent of full-time students, 5.4 percent of part-time students, 60.0 percent and 57.5 percent of medium risk, and 32.2 percent and 36.9 percent of low risk, respectively. This partly surprising result is explained by the stronger integration of correspondence students into the labor market, as they are characterized by employment during training. This results in serious differences between the two groups of students in terms of student-employee identity (Fónai 2018), the identity of full-time students is that they are students, even if they work alongside their university studies. In contrast, correspondent students have an "employee" identity and are only secondary to learning. At the same time, the situation of correspondence students is very ambivalent, being that they "embed" them into the labour market, making them less at risk of precariousness. At the same time, due to studies in addition to work, drop-out rates are higher among them, which ultimately also results in a precarious situation (Fónai, 2018).

Student loans also have a clear linear effect on precariousness risk. 20% of students ( $n=180$ ) in the high-risk group, 17.8% ( $n=1345$ ) in the medium-risk group and 15.5% ( $n=662$ ) in the low-risk group had student loans ( $p=0.000$ , Cramer V = 0.036)

The level of training has a significant effect on the risk of precariousness, and the strength of the relationship between the two variables is also higher (Table 2).

Table 2. Relationship between precarious risk groups and training level, frequency

	High risk	Medium risk	Low risk
BA/BSc	652	4811	1779
MA/MSc	203	2350	1749
Unified, undivided training	38	347	719

Source: *The Information System of Higher Education, own calculation*

*Pearson Chi-Square=908,858, sign=0,000, Cramer's Phi=0,268 sign=0,000*

The effect of the level of training can be formulated in such a way that a higher level of training is associated with a lower risk of precariousness. A higher level of education

provides higher protection, in several areas, such as labor market status or the level of application of the acquired knowledge, as well as the level of education required for the job. Due to the traditions of Hungarian higher education, the training of the highest status and prestige majors takes place in an “undivided” form (doctors, pharmacists, lawyers), so in their case, in addition to the level of education, the traditionally high occupational status also protects against precariousness. At the same time, for some of the “undivided” training forms, teacher and engineering training, this can no longer be said.

*Among the characteristics of the work*, we examined the effect of work position in terms of the risk of precariousness. Of all the variables examined so far, workplace rankings have the strongest effect on precariousness risk (Table 3).

Table 3. Relationship between precarious risk groups and workplace classification, frequency

	High risk	Medium risk	Low risk	Total frequency
Senior manager	1	114	144	259
Middle manager	14	695	393	1102
Lower manager	29	628	270	927
Subordinate graduate	274	4843	3144	8261
Subordinate, not a graduate	403	586	55	1044

Source: *The Information System of Higher Education*, own calculation

*Pearson Chi-Square = 2300,345 sign=0,000, Cramer's Phi=0,445 sign=0,000*

Among young graduates approached 1 or 3 years after graduation, it is natural that the largest group is subordinate graduates, but the proportion of middle managers is also quite high. The job position, the position in the hierarchy, has a clear correlation with the risk of precariousness, the higher the position, the lower the risk of precariousness. It is also clear that the degree “protects”, as those who work in non-graduate jobs have reported very high risks. But more favorable positions in the hierarchy of work organizations do not mean absolute security either, as the “medium” risk of precariousness is most common with the exception of senior executives.

Based on the cross-tabulation analyzes, we saw that each of the independent variables involved (with different relationship strengths) showed a significant correlation with the risk of precariousness. Multinomial regression analysis was also used to examine the odds differences between the values (groups) of the independent variables for high and medium precarious risk (Table 4).

Table 4. Odds ratio of multinomial regression, odds ratio (Exp (B) - for high and medium precarious risk, compared to low precarious risk

	B	Exp(B)	Sig
<b>High risk</b>			
<b>BA/BSc</b>	1.715	5.556	0.000
<b>MA/MSc</b>	1.409	4.093	0.000
<b>Undivided</b>			
<b>Full-time</b>	0.866	2.378	0.000
<b>Correspondent</b>			
<b>Subordinate, not graduate</b>	6.607	739.990	0.000
<b>Subordinate graduate</b>	2.129	8.403	0.035
<b>Lower manager</b>	2.392	10.937	0.020
<b>Middle manager</b>	1.435	4.200	0.168
<b>Senior manager</b>			

## RECENT ISSUES IN SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

<b>Male</b>	-0.282	0.754	0.004
<b>Female</b>			
<b>Medium risk</b>			
<b>BA/BSc</b>	1.757	5.795	0.000
<b>MA/MSc</b>	1.172	3.228	0.000
<b>Undivided</b>			
<b>Full-time</b>	0.268	1.308	0.000
<b>Correspondent</b>			
<b>Subordinate, not graduate</b>	2.410	11.130	0.000
<b>Subordinate graduate</b>	0.555	1.742	0.000
<b>Lower manager</b>	0.960	2.612	0.000
<b>Middle manager</b>	0.705	2.025	0.000
<b>Senior manager</b>			
<b>Male</b>	0.045	1.046	0.301
<b>Female</b>			

Source: *The Information System of Higher Education, own calculation*

Four models were developed for the analysis, all eight independent variables were included in the first model, and then a four-variable model was adopted after omitting the variables with non-significant effect (Table 4). Training level, full-time/part-time training, job title, and gender were included in this model (Likelihood Ratio Test Sig 0.000; Cox and Snell 0.117, Nagelkerke 0.216, McFadden 0.114).

Odds ratios show the chance of high and medium risk of precariousness relative to low risk for independent variables included in the model (what effect they have on the dependent variable, i.e., the expected evolution of high and medium risk of precariousness).

In terms of *the level of training*, we can see that compared to undivided training, MA/MSc and BA/BSc courses induce a high precarious risk by four to five times and three, almost six times as much by medium precarious risk (compared to low risk). This confirms what was explained in the cross-tabulation analysis, undivided trainees in the Hungarian labor market have multiple advantages in terms of risk of precariousness compared to graduates at BA/BSc and MA/MSc levels, and although there is a significant difference between BA/BSc and MA/MSc graduates, higher education and the labour market favor graduates with „undivided” degree.

There is also a 2.4- to 1.3-fold difference between the chances of *full-time and correspondence graduates* in favor of correspondence graduates. The differences have already been shown by the cross-tabulation analyzes, the regression analysis shows the difference in the odds. We have already explained regarding the differences, and we explained the lower precariousness risks among those who graduated from the correspondence training with a more favorable integration into the labour market.

The biggest differences in opportunities can be observed in the *position at the workplace*, which has already been projected by the cross-tabulation analysis. Compared to senior executives, non-graduates have a 740-fold difference in the risk of someone being at high risk and an 11-fold difference in medium risk. The difference between the odds ratios of senior managers and subordinate, not graduate jobs is extremely high (939.99) and the associated confidence interval is 101.02; 5420.52. This suggests that there is indeed a question of reliability for exp (B), but the lower value of the confidence interval is also greater than 100, so we think that our conclusion is correct.

*These differences in chances may also mean that graduates working in non-graduate positions can be realistically classified as a precarious.* Compared to those in senior positions,

other responding graduates also have a significantly different chance of being exposed to high- and medium-risk precariousness.

In our previous analysis (R. Fedor & Fónai 2017) we looked at the risk of male and female precariousness among young graduates, in our analysis at that time we also found a higher exposure of women to precarious phenomena. The situation is similar in this sample, the cross-tabulation analysis showed a higher risk of precariousness for women. The results of the multinomial regression analysis also show that men are at lower risk of high precariousness compared to women, which is only reversed at medium risk when the odds are more or less equalized.

## Conclusion

The results of our analysis show that the risk of precariousness can be detected even among young graduates in a favorable labor market position. This also substantiates the claims in the literature, as one of the large groups of the precariat is considered to be young people, among whom graduates are also present.

To examine and measure the risk of precariousness, we developed an index based on the analyzed database and questionnaire of the Hungarian Graduate Tracking System. Based on our original analysis, the developed index and its original variables are suitable for measuring risk of precarity and also for predicting risk, so higher education policy, universities and employers would be able to measure and indicate the risk of precariousness and develop interventions based on it too.

Overall, it can be stated that among the analyzed predictive variables, mainly the type of employment contract, the application of the acquired professional knowledge and the level of education required for the job pose a higher precarious risk, which may also lead to actual entry into the precarious. The level of training, the job position, the position in the job hierarchy, and the degree-requiring - non-degree-requiring nature of the job have a greater impact on the risk of precariousness. The young graduates surveyed appear to be more likely to fall into the Standing's "classes" of "salariat" and "proficians," but the proportion of those who even actually belong to the precariat is quite significant. It is important to emphasise that the situation of young graduates in Hungary is not radically different from their European counterparts, but there is a significant difference compared to young people in Southern Europe, for example - the labour market situation of young Hungarian graduates seems to be more stable.

## References

- Armano, E., & Murgia, A. (2015). The precariousnesses of young knowledge workers. A subject-oriented approach. In M. Johnson (ed.) *Precariat: Labour, Work and Politics*, New York, Routledge, 102-117.
- Benach, J., Vives, A., Amable M., Vanroelen, C., Tarafa, G., & Muntaner, C. (2014). Precarious Employment: Understanding an Emerging Social Determinant of Health. *Annu. Rev. Public Health*, 35, 229–253. doi: 10.1146/annurev-publhealth-032013-182500.
- Bessant, J. (2018). Young Precariat and a New Work Order? A Case for Historical Sociology. *Journal of Youth Studies*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2017.1420762>
- Budowski, M., Tillmann, R., Keim, W., & Amacker, M. (2010). Conceptualising 'precarious prosperity'—empirical and theoretical elements for debate. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*. SAGE Publications, 51(4), 268-288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00207152103688>

- Cabasés, M. A., & Úbeda, M. (2021). The Youth Guarantee in Spain: A worrying situation after its implementation. *Economics and Sociology*, 14(3), 89-104. doi:10.14254/2071-789X.2021/14-3/5
- Candeias, M. (2007). Unmaking and Remaking of Class: The „Impossible” Precariat between Fragmentation and Movement. *Policy Paper* (3), 1-12.
- Cranford, C J., Vosko L. F., & Zukewich N. (2003). Precarious Employment in the Canadian Labour Market: a Statistical Portrait. *Just Labour* vol. 3 (Fall 2003) 6-22.
- Elios, B. (2018). Historicizing Precarious Work: Forty Years of Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities. *IRSH* 63, 273–319. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0020859018000329>
- European Parliament, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, Policy Department A: Economic and Scientific Policy, Precarious Employment in Europe, Part 1: Patterns, Trends and Policy Strategies (Brussels, 2016).
- Ferge, Zs. (2012). Prekariátus és Magyarország. *Fordulat* (19), 116-127.
- Fónai, M. (2018). A hallgatói lemorzsolódás törésvonalai a Debreceni Egyetemen. 239-249. In: *Lemorzsolódás és perzisztencia a felsőoktatásban*. Edited by Pusztai G. and Szigeti F. Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, Debrecen University Press.
- Frase, P. (2013). The Precariat: a class or a condition? *New Labor Forum*, 22(2), 11–14.
- Fuller, S., & Vosko, L. F. (2008). Temporary Employment and Social Inequality in Canada: Exploring Intersections of Gender, Race and Immigration Status. *Social Indicators Research*, (88), 31-55.
- Gauffin, K. (2020). Precariousness on the Swedish labour market: A theoretical and empirical account. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1035304620919206>
- Lauzadyte-Tutliene, A., & Mikuciauskaitė, P. (2022). Analysis of gender wage gap in Lithuania. *Economics and Sociology*, 15(2), 172-185. doi:10.14254/2071-789X.2022/15-2/11
- LaVaque-Manty, M. (2009). Finding Theoretical Concepts in the Real World: The Case of the Precariat. In: *New Waves in Political Philosophy*. Ed: de Bruin, Boudewijn de Bruin – Zurn, Christopher F. Palgrave Macmillan, 105-124.
- Lodovici, M. S., & Semenza, R. (eds) (2012). Precarious Work and High-Skilled Youth in Europe. European Commission. <https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/precarius-work-and-high-skilled-youth-europe>
- McKay, S., Jefferys, S., Paraksevopoulou, A., & Keles, J. (2012). Study on Precarious work and social rights. Carried out for the European Commission. Working Lives Research Institute, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, London Metropolitan University.
- Mikołajczak, P. (2021). What affects employment by NGOs? Counteraction to precarious employment in the Polish non-profit sector in the perspective of COVID-19 pandemic crises. *Oeconomia Copernicana*, 12(3), 761–788. <https://doi.org/10.24136/oc.2021.025>.
- Mishchuk, H., Samoliuk, N., & Yurchyk, H. (2021). *Decent work: evaluation and ensuring in human capital management*: monograph: Szczecin: Centre of Sociological Research. 140 p. DOI: 10.14254/978-83-959336-5-3/2021 URL: [https://csr-pub.eu/?49,en\\_decent-work-evaluation-and-ensuring-in-human-capital-management](https://csr-pub.eu/?49,en_decent-work-evaluation-and-ensuring-in-human-capital-management)
- Motakef, M. (2019). Recognition and precarity of life arrangement: towards an enlarged understanding of precarious working and living conditions, *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory*, 20, 2, 156-172, DOI: 10.1080/1600910X.2019.1610019
- Neilson, B., & Rossiter, N. (2008). Precarity as a political concept, or, Fordism as exception. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25(7–8), 51–72. DOI:10.1177/0263276408097796

- Papík, M., Mihaľová, P., & Papíková, L. (2022). Determinants of youth unemployment rate: case of Slovakia. *Equilibrium. Quarterly Journal of Economics and Economic Policy*, 17(2), 391–414. <https://doi.org/10.24136/eq.2022.013>.
- Pavanelli, R. (2020). Rentier capitalism and debt. Introduction. *PSI Briefing Series – Debt and workers*.  
[https://pop-umbrella.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/99e023db-9f48-4a15-aa48-3db6e480b1cb\\_65e90c9c-b8f1-4102-a3cc-5ca096087a54\\_DebtBriefOne\\_26-11-2019\\_5\\_.pdf](https://pop-umbrella.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/99e023db-9f48-4a15-aa48-3db6e480b1cb_65e90c9c-b8f1-4102-a3cc-5ca096087a54_DebtBriefOne_26-11-2019_5_.pdf)
- Polkowska, D. (2016). The “precarity trap” of Poland’s youth labour market: flexible employment a barrier or opportunity? *Emecon. Employment and economy in Central and Eastern Europe*, 1, 1-16.
- Remeikiene, R., & Gaspareniene, L. (2021). Nexus between unemployment and the shadow economy in Lithuanian regions during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of International Studies*, 14(3), 59-72. doi:10.14254/2071-8330.2021/14-3/4
- R. Fedor, A. (2021a). Job Satisfaction in Hungary - Comparative Study, *Economics and Sociology*, (14), 331-349. DOI:10.14254/2071-789X.2021/14-2/18
- R. Fedor, A. (2021b). *Regional characteristics of the precariat on the labour market*. Debrecen, Magyarország: Debrecen University Press.
- R. Fedor, A. (2018). A prekariátus, mint a munkaerőpiac új jellemzője.’ (Precariat as a new feature of the labour market). *Habilitációs tézisek*. (Habilitation thesis). Debrecen: University of Debrecen. p. 46.
- R. Fedor, A., & Fónai, M. (2017). *A magasan kvalifikált fiatal munkavállalói csoportok elemzésének új megközelítési lehetősége: a prekariátus*. *Különleges Bánásmód*, 3 (4): 7-17.
- Standing, G. (2011). *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. p. 198.
- Standing, G. (2014). Denizens and the precariat. *A Precariat Charter: From denizens to citizens*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. 1–32. Bloomsbury Collections. Web. 12 Jun. 2021.
- Standing, G. (2015). The Precariat and Class Struggle. *RCCS Annual Review*, 7(7), 3-16.
- Standing, G. (2018). ‘*The Precariat: Today’s Transformative Class?*’ October 2018. <https://greattransition.org/publication/precariat-transformative-class>
- Sik, E., & Szeitl, B. (2016). A prekariátus mint munkaerő-piaci csoport. *Metszetek*, 5(3), 3-40.
- Szépe, A. (2012). Prekariátus – Miért pont most és miért pont itt? *Fordulat*, (19), 10-27.
- Szépe, A. (2016). A prekariátus fogalmának kialakulása és egy lehetséges újragondolása. *Doctoral thesis*. Budapest: ELTE Szociológiai Doktori Iskola.