

Summary of key results: attitudes of the Hungarian population on people with disabilities and their travel habits



ADAM MICKIEWICZ
UNIVERSITY
IN POZNAŃ



SAPIENTIA
HUNGARIAN UNIVERSITY
OF TRANSYLVANIA



Authors

Csapó, J., Csóka, L., Gonda, T., Raffay, Z.

Pécs

2024

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Summary of key results: attitudes of the Hungarian population on people with disabilities and their travel habits

Introduction

Accessible tourism, which focuses on providing equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate in tourism activities, has increasingly gained attention as an essential component of social inclusion. Traditionally, research in this field has concentrated primarily on the perspectives of individuals with disabilities. However, to fully understand the landscape and identify potential areas for development, it is crucial to also consider the attitudes of the general population. Recognising this research gap, the partners working on the Accessible project have undertaken to carry out an online survey of 1000-1000 people in the 4 countries concerned (Hungary, Poland, Croatia and Romania), covering the whole population. This study, conducted as part of the Accessible Project (No. 2022-2-HU01-KA220-HED-000099410, "The development of the innovative educational method of ACCESSIBLE tourism in Central Europe – ACCESSIBLE"), aims to fill this gap by surveying the general public in Hungary to gauge their perceptions and attitudes towards accessible tourism.

The research involved a comprehensive survey of 1,000 Hungarian participants, selected to reflect a balanced representation of the population in terms of gender and age. The study's findings provide invaluable insights into how the public perceives the current state of accessible tourism, the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, and the societal support for future improvements in this area.

As dedicated researchers on the subject, we are pleased to note that the vast majority of the population has a sufficient empathy with the issue and is supportive of the further development of accessible tourism.

Demographic representation and sampling

The Hungarian segment of the study was meticulously designed to ensure that the sample was representative of the national population, particularly concerning gender and age distribution. The survey included 52.5% female and 47.5% male respondents, mirroring the national demographic structure. The age distribution of the participants also closely aligned with the national averages, ensuring that the results accurately reflect the views of different age groups within the population.

However, it is worth noting that the sample was somewhat skewed towards individuals with higher educational attainment, who were overrepresented in the survey. This demographic detail is significant because individuals with higher education levels may possess greater awareness of social issues, including the importance of accessibility in tourism. This overrepresentation might therefore have influenced the findings, particularly in terms of the expressed support for accessible tourism initiatives.

Awareness of difficulties faced by people with disabilities

One of the central aspects of the survey was to assess the public's awareness of the specific challenges that people with disabilities encounter when engaging in tourism activities. The findings indicate a high level of public awareness regarding these

challenges, with a significant proportion of respondents recognizing the substantial difficulties that individuals with disabilities face, particularly in the realm of public transportation.

Respondents identified long-distance bus and rail transportation as the areas posing the greatest challenges for individuals with disabilities. These transportation modes were rated as inadequate by a significant portion of the population, highlighting a critical area where improvements are urgently needed. This perception aligns with the broader issues faced by public transportation systems in Hungary, where accessibility remains a significant barrier for people with disabilities.

In contrast, the survey revealed that accommodation and dining services were perceived as less problematic. These sectors were rated more favourably, suggesting that they have made more significant strides in improving accessibility. This finding indicates that while there are areas where accessibility has been successfully integrated into services, there remain critical gaps, particularly in transportation, that need to be addressed to ensure a more inclusive tourism experience.

Public perception of accessibility in tourism

The survey results reveal a broad recognition among the Hungarian public of the need for significant improvements in accessible tourism. A substantial majority of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the current state of accessibility in tourism, with over 60% viewing the situation as less than ideal. Notably, more than 20% of respondents considered the current state of accessible tourism to be entirely unacceptable, which underscores the urgency of addressing these issues.

An important result is that our survey shows that there is almost a social consensus on the need to improve the situation of accessible tourism. This widespread dissatisfaction suggests that the general public is not only aware of the barriers faced by individuals with disabilities but also perceives the current efforts to address these barriers as insufficient. The recognition of these shortcomings is an important step towards mobilizing public support for the necessary changes.

Furthermore, the survey highlighted strong public support for initiatives aimed at improving accessible tourism. Approximately 87.3% of respondents agreed that substantial investments and a shift in societal attitudes are necessary to ensure that everyone has equal access to tourism services and attractions. This overwhelming consensus indicates that there is a strong foundation of public support for efforts to enhance accessibility in tourism, which could be a critical factor in driving policy changes and encouraging investment in this area.

Support for enhancing accessible tourism

The data from the survey clearly demonstrate that there is a robust consensus among the Hungarian public on the importance of improving accessible tourism. The survey findings reveal that nearly nine out of ten respondents believe that significant improvements are necessary to ensure that individuals with disabilities can fully participate in tourism activities. This consensus is reflected in the strong support for various initiatives aimed at enhancing accessibility.

Specifically, 36.4% of respondents expressed the view that significant investments and a fundamental shift in societal attitudes are needed immediately to ensure equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the tourism sector. Another 50.9% of respondents advocated for continuous efforts to improve accessibility, indicating a recognition of the long-term nature of this challenge. Only a small fraction of respondents (0,6%) believed that no further improvements were necessary, highlighting the widespread recognition of the importance of this issue.

This strong support for improving accessible tourism suggests that the Hungarian public is not only aware of the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities but is also willing to support efforts to address these challenges. This public backing could be crucial in driving policy changes and encouraging both public and private sector investment in accessibility initiatives.

Defining the target groups for accessible tourism

One of the challenges highlighted by the survey is the difficulty in defining the target groups for accessible tourism. The survey results reflect a lack of consensus among respondents regarding the proportion of the population that could benefit from accessible tourism. This ambiguity is consistent with the broader challenges faced by experts in the field, where there is no clear agreement on the exact size of the population that requires accessible tourism services.

The survey responses were spread across all five categories provided, with no single category dominating, which underscores the uncertainty in defining the target demographic for accessible tourism. This lack of consensus points to the need for further research and clearer guidelines to help policymakers and industry stakeholders better understand the scope of the demand for accessible tourism services.

Attitudes towards specific aspects of accessible tourism

The survey also explored public attitudes towards specific aspects of accessible tourism using a seven-point Likert scale. For the answers to the general questions related to accessible tourism, a scale value of 1 indicates total disagreement and a scale value of 7 indicates total agreement. Acceptance of strongly agree (scale 7) is extremely high for all questions, so the results were overwhelmingly positive, with a large majority of respondents expressing strong support for various aspects of accessible tourism. For example, over 80% of respondents selected a score above the mid-point of the scale (4 or higher), indicating widespread support for accessible tourism initiatives (and disagreement is below 10% in all cases).

Among the specific aspects of accessible tourism, respondents expressed strong support for ensuring accessibility in public transportation, accommodations, and communication channels. For instance, a significant majority of respondents agreed that it is a legitimate expectation for public transportation systems to be fully accessible to individuals with disabilities. Similarly, there was strong support for the notion that accommodations and communication channels should be made accessible to all, reflecting a broad recognition of the importance of these elements in promoting inclusive tourism.

The results also indicate a high level of public empathy towards individuals with disabilities. Respondents generally expressed a positive attitude towards accessible tourism, with many recognizing the importance of making tourism experiences accessible to everyone, regardless of their physical abilities. This empathy is a critical factor in fostering a more inclusive society, where the needs of individuals with disabilities are considered and addressed in all aspects of life, including tourism.

Social inclusion and empathy: a complex picture

While the survey results paint a largely positive picture of public attitudes towards accessible tourism, they also reveal some complexities in the broader societal context. Specifically, while respondents expressed strong personal support for accessible tourism and empathy towards individuals with disabilities, they were less confident in the broader society's willingness to embrace these changes.

For example, while many respondents indicated that they personally support accessible tourism, they were more sceptical about the extent to which the wider society shares this commitment. This discrepancy suggests that while there is strong personal support for accessibility initiatives, there may be concerns about whether these values are widely shared across society. This finding points to the need for continued public education and awareness-raising efforts to ensure that the importance of accessible tourism is understood and embraced by all segments of society.

Moreover, the survey revealed that while respondents generally expressed empathy and support for individuals with disabilities, there were some areas where societal attitudes were perceived as less favourable. For instance, respondents indicated that while they personally might support accessible tourism, they believed that others in society might be less supportive. This perception of societal attitudes highlights the need for ongoing efforts to promote social inclusion and challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about individuals with disabilities.

Conclusion

The research provides a comprehensive overview of public attitudes towards accessible tourism in Hungary, offering valuable insights that can inform future policy and practice in this area. The findings suggest that there is a strong personal commitment among the Hungarian public to supporting accessible tourism, coupled with a broad recognition of the challenges that remain, particularly in the area of public transportation.

The widespread support for improvements in accessible tourism, as reflected in the survey results, provides a solid foundation for future initiatives aimed at enhancing accessibility in the tourism sector. This public backing is crucial for driving the necessary policy changes and encouraging both public and private sector investment in accessibility initiatives.

However, the research also highlights some challenges, particularly in terms of defining the target groups for accessible tourism and addressing the perceived gaps between personal support for accessibility and broader societal attitudes. These challenges underscore the need for continued research, public education, and awareness-raising efforts to ensure that accessible tourism is fully embraced by all segments of society.

In conclusion, the research findings indicate that while significant progress has been made in improving accessibility in some areas of tourism, there is still much work to be done. By addressing the areas of greatest concern, particularly public transportation, and continuing to foster a supportive environment for inclusive tourism, Hungary can make significant strides towards becoming a more accessible and inclusive destination for all travellers.