

3 GAINING WORK EXPERIENCE

3.1 STUDENT WORK

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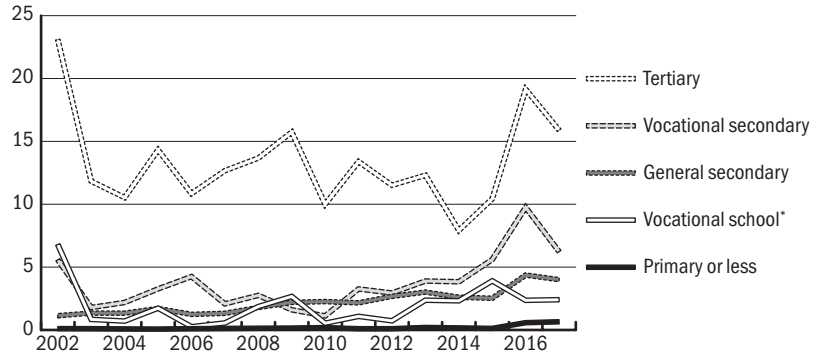
It usually takes some time for young people starting their careers to find their first job and sign their first employment contract (*Pastore-Zimmermann, 2019*). This can be explained by several factors. On the one hand, entrants tend to be less experienced in job search and have fewer acquaintances who can help them find the right job, than those who have been working for several years. On the other hand, they have little work experience, so their employment poses a greater risk to employers, especially if their expected productivity is around or below the (guaranteed) minimum wage. At the same time, not finding a job for a long time can also permanently worsen their future job opportunities. It is therefore particularly important to assess the forms of work where they can gain experience while studying or after leaving school. Full-time students can work while studying outside the framework provided by the school: in this subchapter, we examine its prevalence based on the data of the Hungarian Labour Force Survey.

Student work, as it can take time away from studying, does not necessarily improve future employment opportunities. However, according to international literature, working outside school hours, during breaks, or for a few hours, as well as working in a field related to their studies reduces students' school performance less, and according to certain estimates, it improves future employment opportunities (*Nevt et al, 2018*).

The share of those who work while studying is traditionally low in Hungary by European standards (*Bajnai et al, 2009, p. 73*). Between 2003 and 2010, 1 percent of full-time students aged 15–29 worked, in the following years 1.5 percent worked, and in recent years the proportion of those working while studying remained below 3 percent. Student work is more common only among those who have already obtained their first degree, but even in this special group (accounting for 2 percent of all full-time students), the proportion of employees is only 10–15 percent (*Figure 3.1.1*). Those directly entering into higher education after secondary school rarely start working before graduating: the share of employees in this group is barely 2–3 percent.

Working while studying shows a slow increase after 2011, especially among students staying in education after vocational secondary education (*Figure 3.1.1*). We do not find significant differences between the sexes in the prevalence of student work (*Figure 3.1.2*). Young women continuing their studies after their first degree worked at a higher rate than men before 2010, but between 2010 and 2016, the employment of female students declined, while that of men increased, so the difference between the sexes decreased to a minimum.

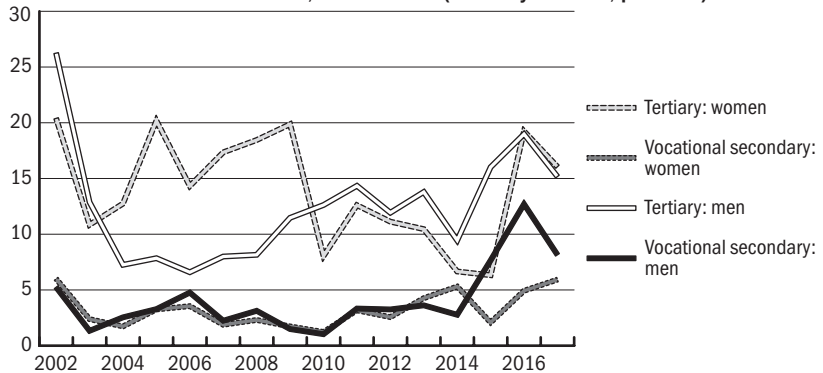
Figure 3.1.1: Share of those working while studying full-time by completed education, 2002–2017 (15–29 years old, per cent)



* ISCED3C.

Source: Own calculation based on CSO Labour Force Survey.

Figure 3.1.2: Share of those working while studying full-time by completed education and sex, 2002–2017 (15–29 years old, per cent)



Source: own calculation based on CSO Labour Force Survey (average of four quarters).

Among young people leaving school, while only a few have work experience, this experience is largely (81 per cent on average in the past 10 years) related to their intended profession which can make their transition to work easier.¹ In theory, the Labour Force Survey of the HCSO would allow a more detailed examination of this issue, if we compared the labour market outcomes after leaving school among the formerly employed and the non-employed. However, the low proportion of those working while studying also means that the sample of the Labour Force Survey includes very few student workers, only 150–200, per quarter. If we further narrow the group of working students to those who have just finished school (in 2017, this would be 18 per cent of full-time students), the number of observations drops to a few dozen. Therefore, due to the low number of observations we are unable to examine how working while studying affects post-graduate employment.

¹ Geel-Backes-Gellner (2012), for example, found in a Swiss survey on graduates' careers that only part-time work related to their field of studies has a positive effect on later employment and wages.

It is possible that student work is inaccurately measured by population surveys, especially in the case of those studying far from their homes, as in this case the student is usually absent when the survey is conducted, and the family member responding to the questionnaire may not be aware of the student working, especially if it is casual. This source of error can be checked by comparing the share of those in employment in cases where it was the student in full-time education herself who answered the questionnaire with those where another family member responded. Among those who answered the questionnaire about themselves, we found that one and a half to two percent were employed, but even these proportions are low (on average 3 percent of the total student population in the years examined), and the difference may be partially due to the fact that in this group the share of young people living separately from their parents is greater, and who therefore are presumably in greater need of labour income.

According to large-sample population surveys conducted between 2000 and 2016, specifically limited to 15–29 year-olds, the share of those working while studying is low as well, although the pre-2012 measurements among students in higher education showed a continuous increase (Szócs, 2014).² According to the 2016 survey, 35 percent of students who stayed in education after their first degree worked, while 13.5 percent of students with a secondary education worked (Szanyi-F.–Susánszky, 2018). The former figure is much higher while the latter is similar to what we calculated based on the Labour Force Survey, but neither reaches the levels observed in other European countries.

² According to the summary of Szócs (2014), in the Youth 2000 survey, only 3–5 percent, in the 2008 survey 11 percent of university students worked regularly in addition to studying.

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