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## **SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION PATTERNS IN VISEGRAD REGION**

### **Hungarian report**



[project fanpage](#)

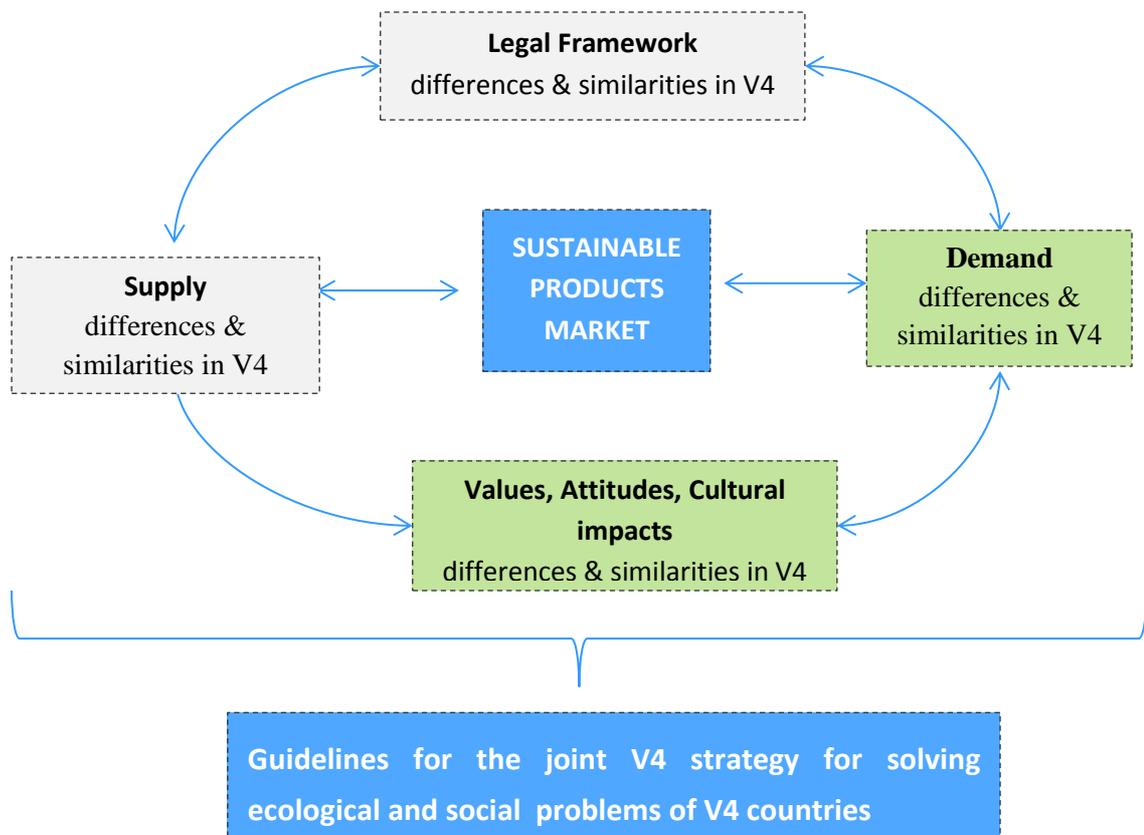
[project website : www.k48.p.lodz.pl/ecomarket](http://www.k48.p.lodz.pl/ecomarket)

The report was prepared in the framework of the project "Prospects of the Visegrad cooperation in promoting a sustainable consumption and production model" The project is supported by the International Visegrad Fund <http://visegradfund.org/>

## The Approach

The objective of this project is to support and strengthen the cohesion of the V4 countries in the efforts to achieve a more sustainable consumption culture and thus more sustainable production models in the selected consumer goods' markets. In the project this will be done within the analysis of intermediate connections and influences of:

- Demand side of the market – consumers
- Values, attitudes and cultural impact
- Supply side of the market – produces
- Legal framework



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The results of this report will concentrate on the first two points: **the demand side of the market represented by consumers, their values and attitudes.**

The importance of demand side analyses result from the fact that gradual environmental degradation, shrinking of non-renewable resources, and lower quality of life are directly or indirectly arising from **snowballing consumption**.

These unfavourable processes concern increasingly also V4 countries and will not stop unless consumption patterns are modified. Therefore the sustainability agenda has gradually been shifting to include consumption alongside production. Manufacturers may use new designs and technologies to minimize the impact of a product on the environment, but their efforts are pointless if consumer do not buy more sustainable goods and do not change their consumption habits.

## Research Aims

The main objective of the project was to too access current consumption patterns in V4 countries, identify the factors that influence those patterns and finally to draw the conclusions for more sustainable consumption models. In detail, the survey examined following aspects of consumers' behaviour:

- Environmental knowledge
- Environmental concern
- Perceived consumer effectiveness & Perceived marketplace influence
- Environmental actions within last twelve months
- Barriers
- Buying behaviour

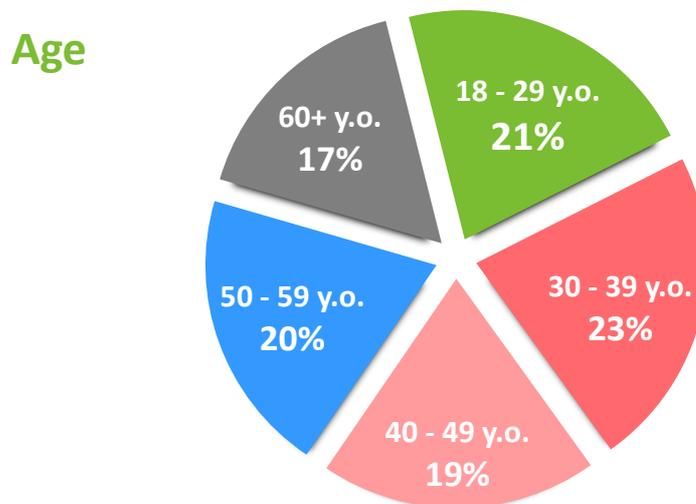
The idea is based on assumption that we might live better by consuming less, making more conscious and rational purchasing decisions. Therefore a change in the attitudes of consumers towards a more responsible behaviour is needed. It is a gradual process that needs appropriate knowledge, awareness, and frequently the modification of long-standing habits.

## Information about the research

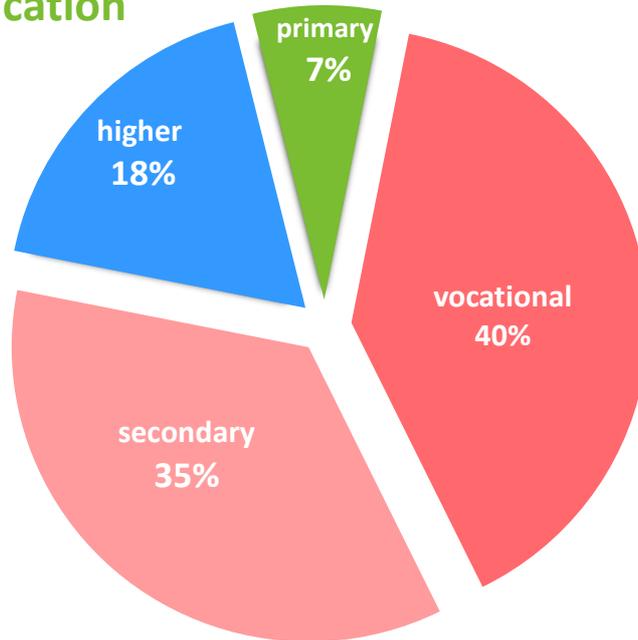
A consumer survey was conducted to examine Hungarian citizens' attitudes and behaviours in the context of sustainable consumption. To ensure sample size and comparability across countries the fieldwork was conducted by TNS Global in the end of March 2015. **Two thousand** randomly-selected V4 citizens, aged 18 and over, were interviewed in the four Visegrad countries.

The interviews were carried out via Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) –global and national access panel database of respondents - reaching 500 citizens in each country.

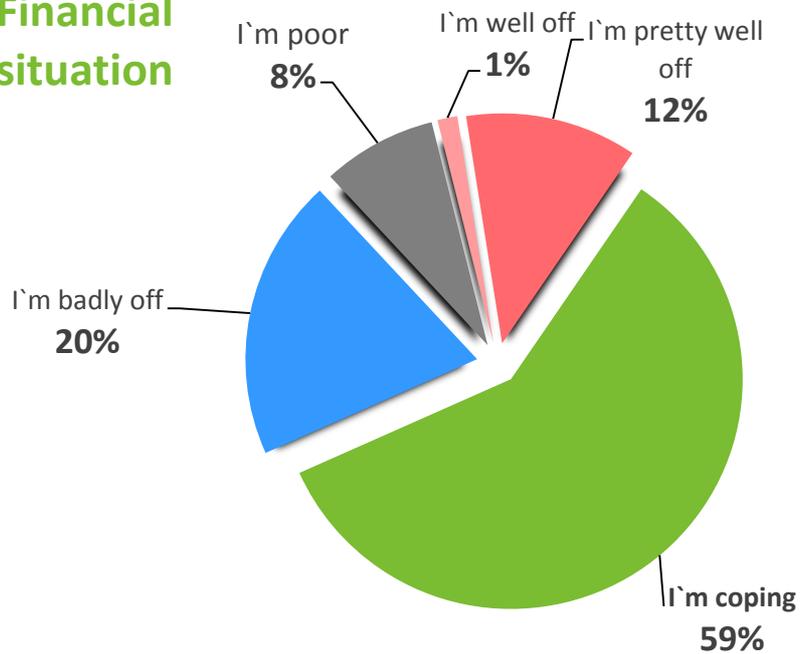
## Structure of respondents in Hungary



### Education



### Financial situation



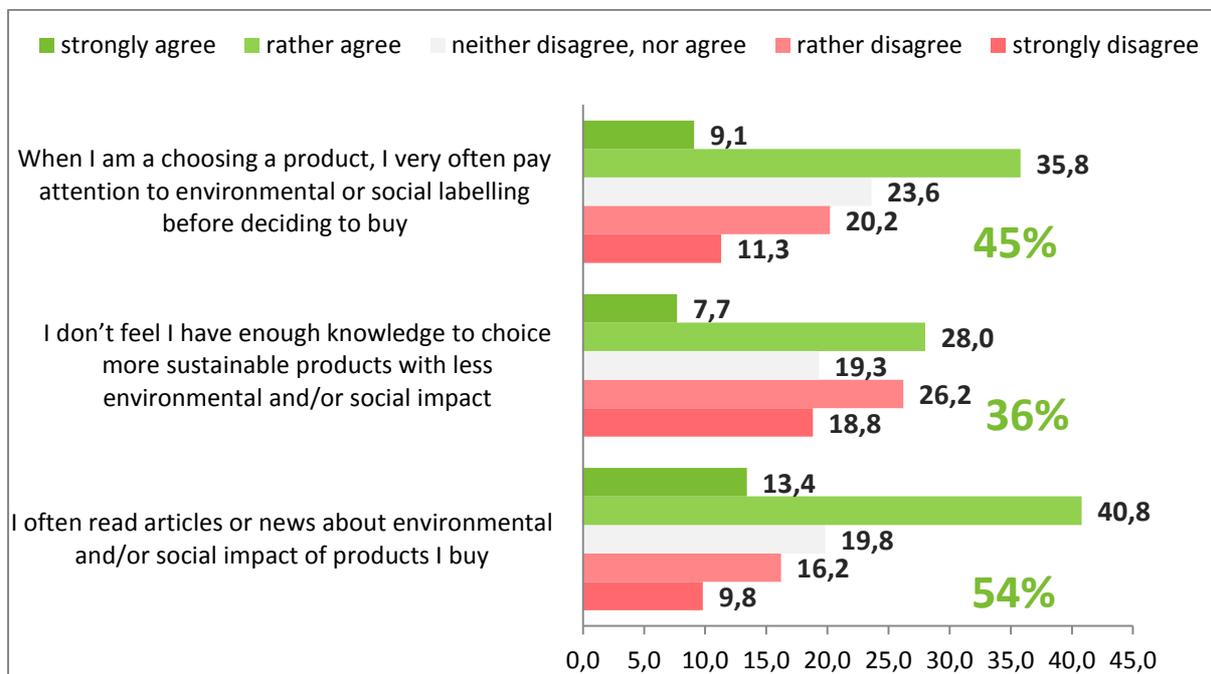
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**THE SURVEY RESULTS**  
**SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION IN HUNGARY**

**Environmental knowledge**

In this section respondents were asked how much they agree or disagree with the three statements allowing to access the level of their environmental knowledge.

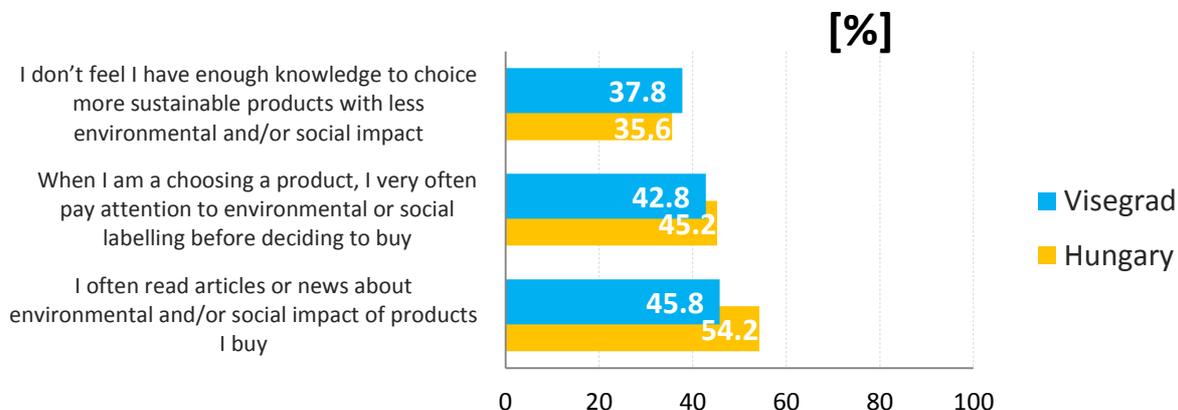
**Environmental knowledge**  
**Hungarian consumers**



When they are choosing a product 45% of Hungarian respondents agreed (strongly or rather) that they very often pay attention to environmental or social labelling before deciding to buy. 36% agreed that they don't feel to have enough knowledge to choose more sustainable products. More than 50% read articles or news about environmental and/or social impact of products they buy.

## Environmental knowledge Hungary vs. V4

Respondents that strongly or rather agree with the following statements



When we compared Hungarian consumers environmental knowledge with the V4 (all four countries) we could say that:

### Hungarian interviewees slightly more frequently declared that they:

- often read articles about environmental of products they buy (**54%** compared to an V4 average of **46%**) and that
- very often pay attention to environmental labelling performance are of no interest to them (**45%** compared to an EU average of **43%**).

#### Highlights:

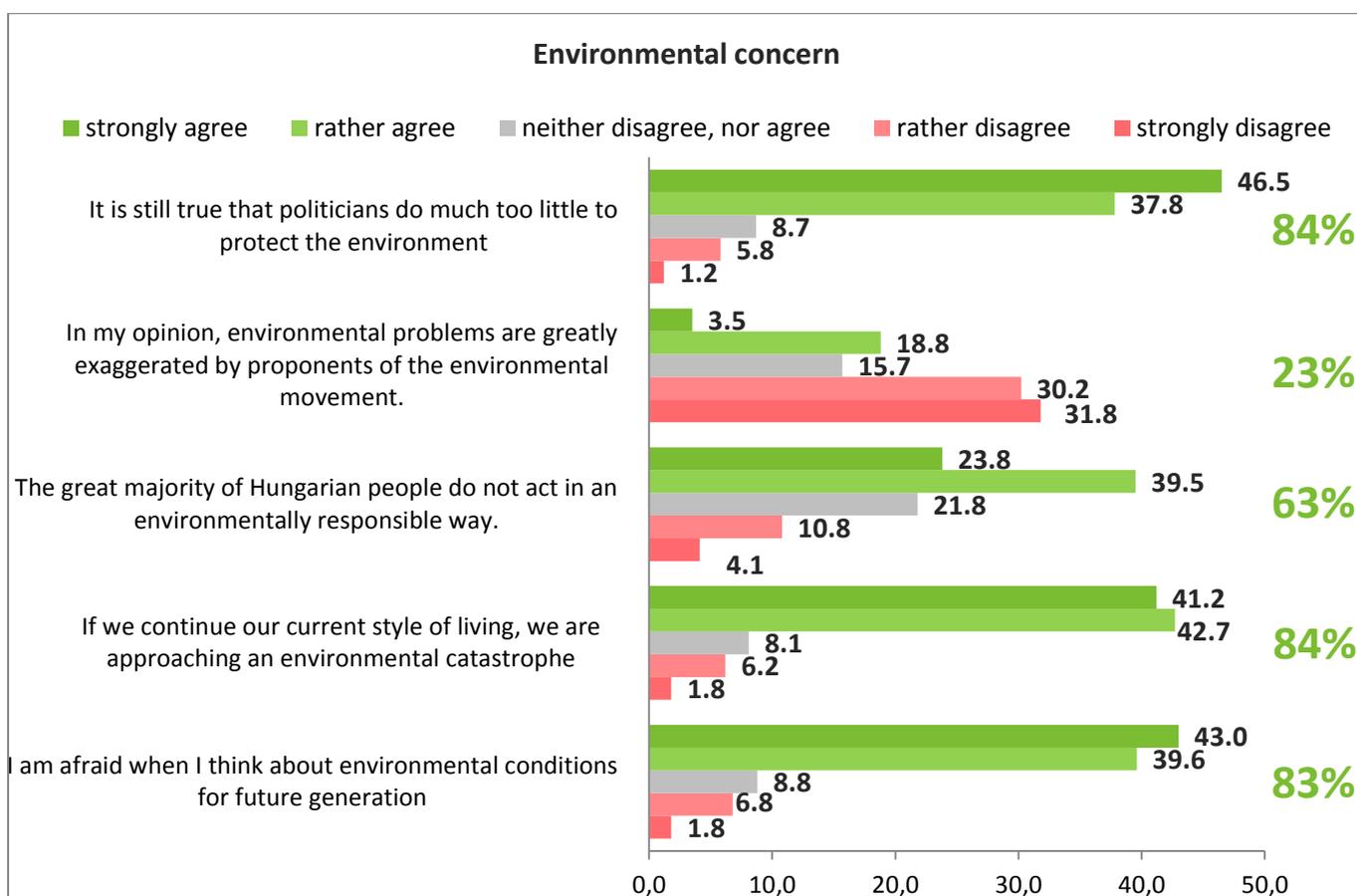
Hungarian consumers are characterized **by moderate ecological knowledge.**

A slim majority of Hungarian respondents agreed either strongly or somewhat that they often read articles about environmental of products they buy and that they very often pay attention to environmental labelling before deciding to buy. At the same time only slightly more than a third declared to have enough knowledge to choose more sustainable products.

## Environmental sensitivity

Another very important factor influencing sustainable consumption is environmental sensitivity. The knowledge itself very often is not enough. What we need is a combination of knowledge, the awareness resulting from it, and the individual predisposition of a particular person produces a category referred to as concern [1][2][3]. Together they can lead to seeking and purchasing sustainable products.

### Environmental sensitivity Hungarian consumers



84% of Hungarian consumers agreed that the politicians do much too little to protect the environment. 23% agreed environmental problems are greatly exaggerated by proponents of the environmental movement. More than 60% of thought that the great majority of Hungarian people do not act in an environmentally responsible way. Majority agreed that we are approaching an environmental catastrophe if we continue our current style of living. 83% thought about environmental conditions for future generation.

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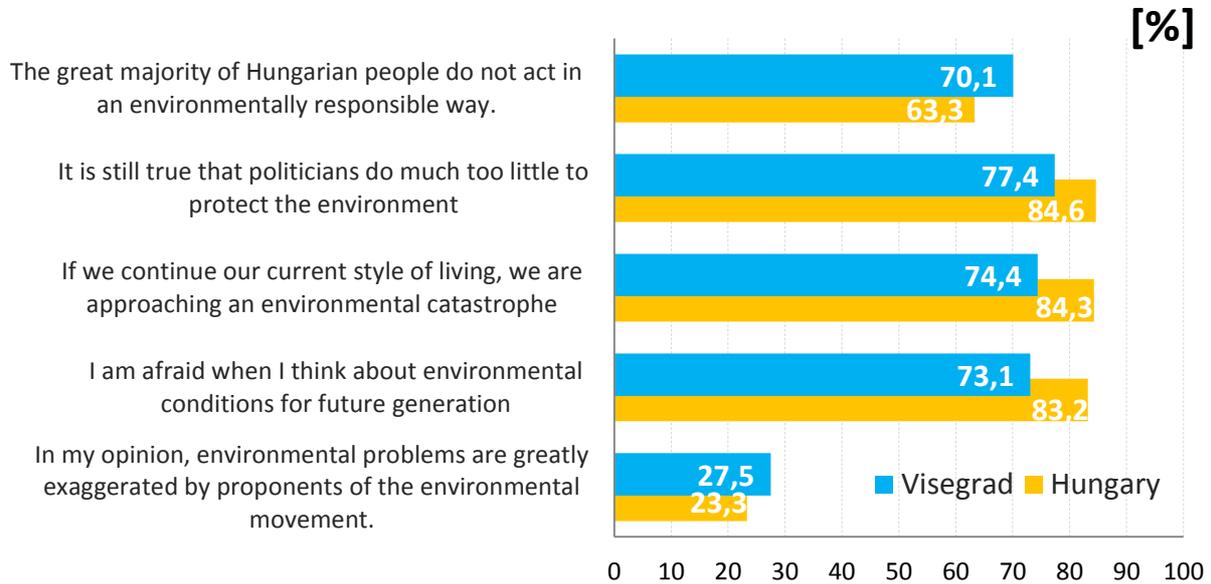
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## • Environmental sensitivity Hungary vs. V4

### Respondents that strongly or rather agree with the following statements



When we compared Hungarian consumers environmental sensitivity with the V4 (all four countries) we could say that:

#### Hungarian interviewees slightly more frequently declared that they:

- it is still true that politicians do much too little to protect environment (**85%** compared to an V4 average of **77%**) and that
- if we continue our current style of living, we are approaching an environmental catastrophe (**84%** compared to an EU average of **74%**).

#### Highlights:

Compared with the environmental knowledge Hungarian consumers represent relatively higher level of environmental sensitivity .

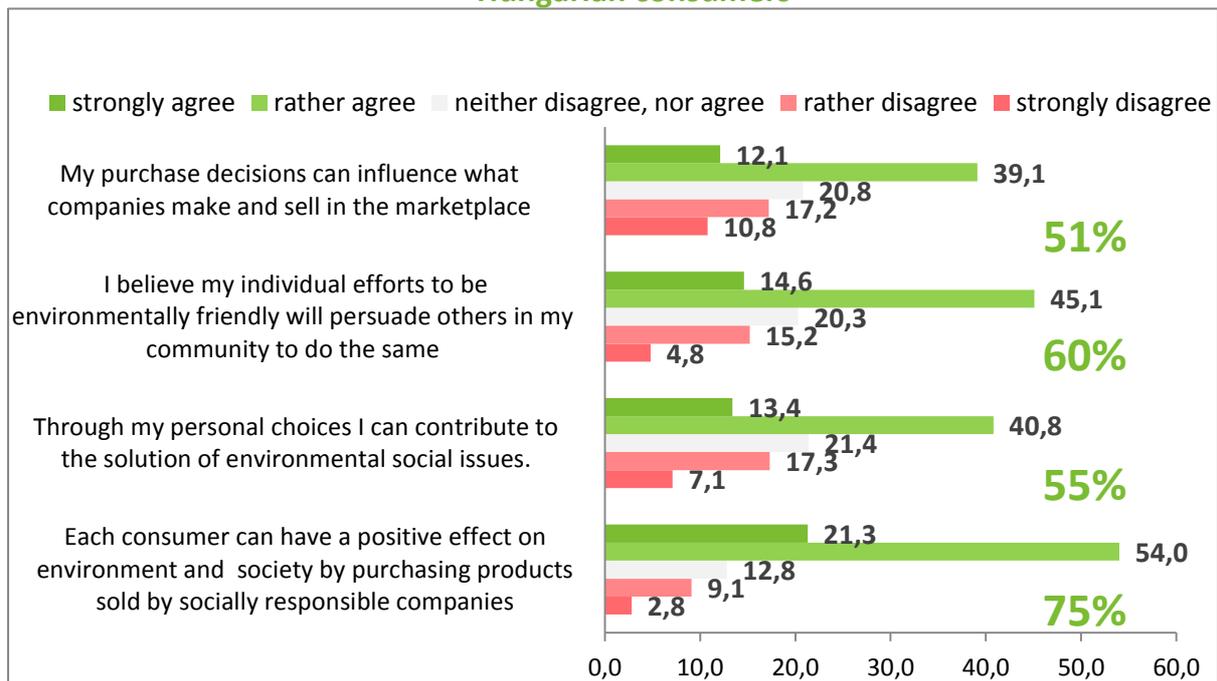
They represented however slightly lower level of environmental sensitivity compared with all V4 counties.

## Perceived consumer effectiveness & perceived marketplace influence

As far as sustainable products are concerned the influence of so called perceived consumer effectiveness PCE is attributed grave importance. The PCE is understood as a measure of the subject's judgement in the ability of individual consumers to affect environmental resource problems [4]. A significant impact of PCE on sustainable consumption was also confirmed in the literature [5,6]. The concept of perceived marketplace influence - PMI is similar to PCE in nature, however, rather than solely looking at whether someone feels their actions are individually making a difference in environmental problems, it captures an individual's belief that their actions are actively influencing the behavior of other marketplace actors – consumers or organisations [7].

We prompted consumers with a four statements to see how much they believe they can make a difference in solving environmental problems and also influence other consumers and companies.

### Perceived consumer effectiveness & Perceived marketplace influence Hungarian consumers



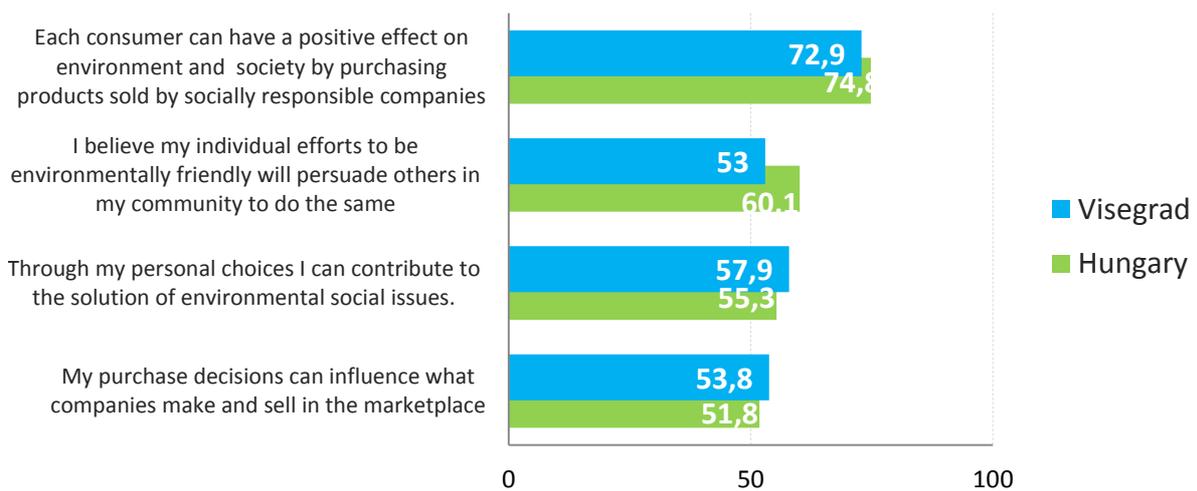
Generally a very clear majority of Hungarian consumers agreed (strongly or rather) with all four statements regarding consumers influence on companies, others in their community and on solving environmental problems. However the the largest percentage of Hungarian respondents (almost 75%) agreed with the most general and therefore “safe” statement referring to all consumers: “Each

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consumer can have a positive effect on environment and society by purchasing products sold by socially responsible companies". With more personal commitments like: "through my personal choices I can contribute to the solution of environmental social issues" and "I believe my individual efforts to be environmentally friendly will persuade others in my community to do the same" agreed 60% of respondents. 55% of Hungarians feel to have personal influence on companies performance (what they make and sell on the market).

**Perceived consumer effectiveness & Perceived marketplace influence Hungary vs. V4 countries**

**Respondents that strongly or rather agree with the following statements [%]**



Comparing Hungarian vs. V4 average sample it may be noted that Hungarian consumers have slightly stronger feeling that they can influence the others in their community, companies' performance and the solution of environmental problems.

**Highlights:**

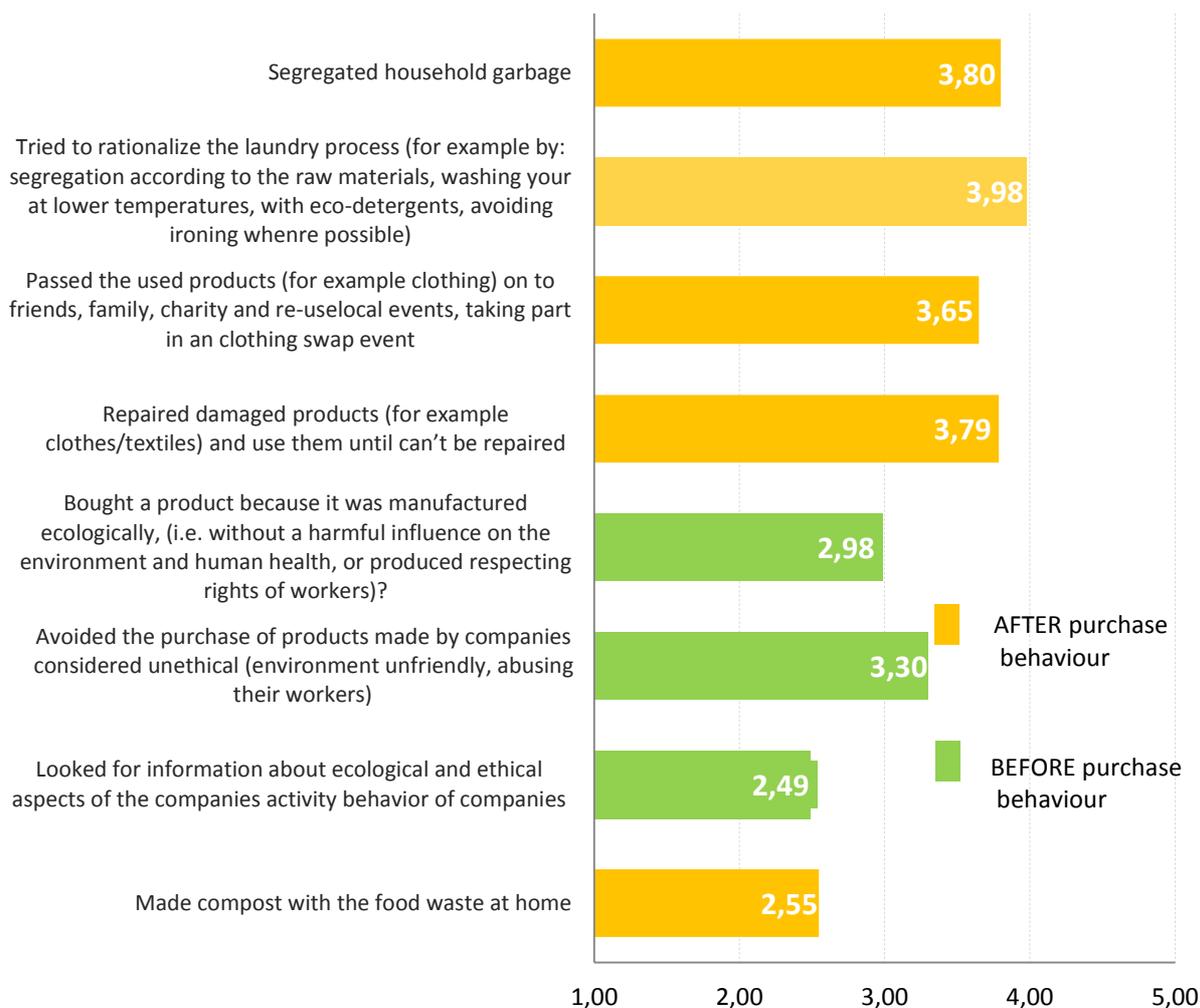
A very clear majority of Hungarian consumers feels to have influence on companies behaviour, others in their community and on solving environmental problems.

Hungarian consumers have slightly stronger feeling about their influence, compared with average V4 countries.

## Consumers behavior in the past 12 months

We also asked the consumers how often, if at all, they undertook concrete actions. Three of the questions related to the **before purchase phase**: looking for information, avoiding the purchase of unethical products and buying sustainable products. The other five concerned the **post purchase behavior**: rationalization of the laundry process, and proceeding with used products: repairing them, passing and swapping, segregating and composting.

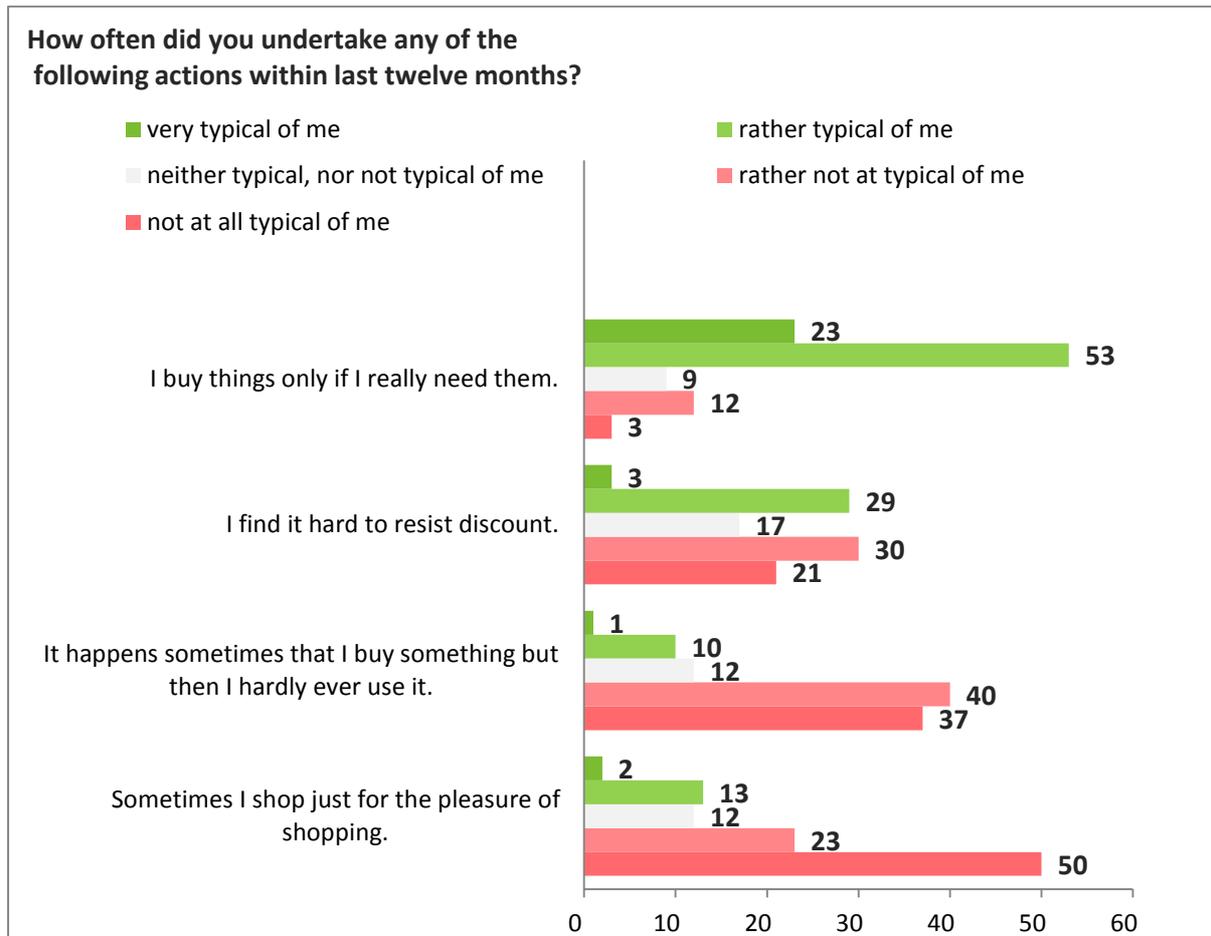
**How often did you undertake any of the following actions within last twelve months?**  
**mean score 1- never; 5- always**



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Generally we can observe that Hungarian consumers are much more active in the after purchase phase and also in those activities that do not require a lot of knowledge and engagement but additionally can bring some economic reward.

## Post-purchase behaviour



Eight out of ten Hungarian consumers declared that they always or often segregated household garbage in the last year, only 4,8% never did it.

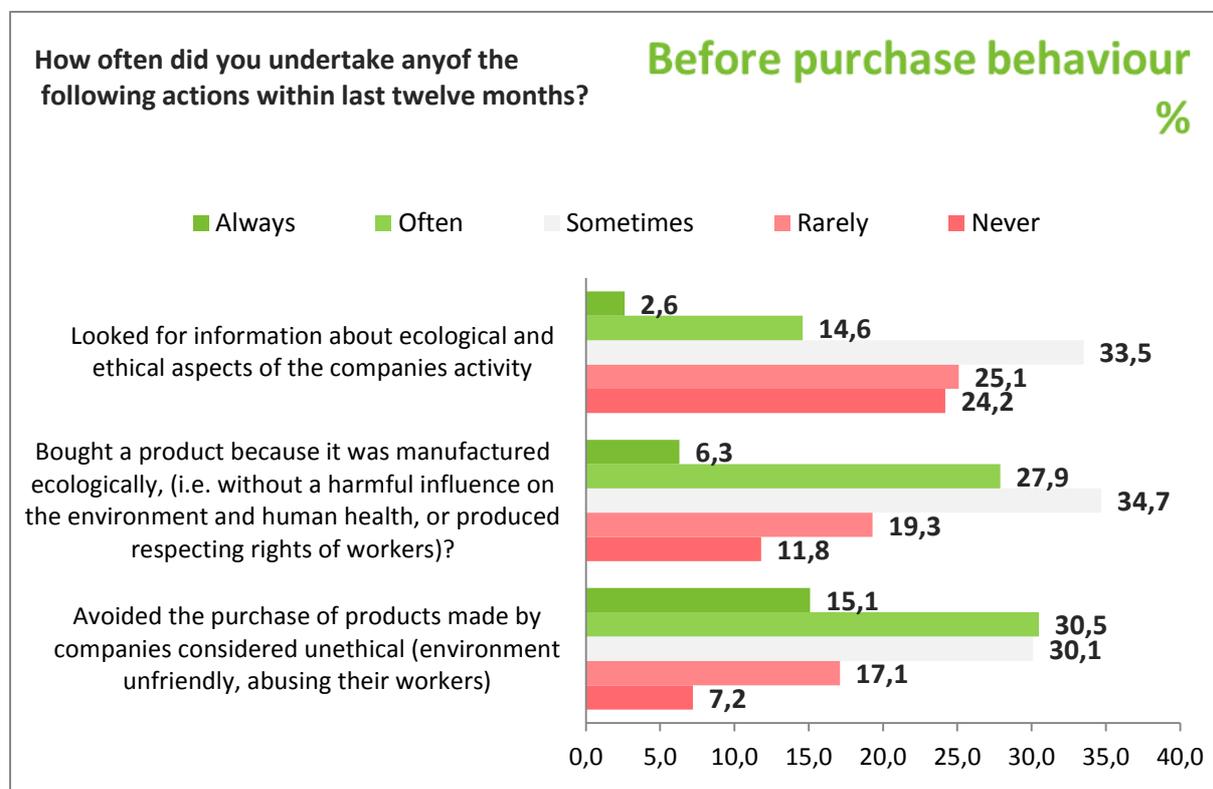
Almost two-thirds always or often tries to rationalize the laundry process (for example by segregation according to the raw materials, washing at lower temperatures, with eco-detergents or avoiding ironing whenever possible), only 3,4% never did it.

The interesting question was also what the Hungarian consumers do with the damaged or used products. Well over half of them always or often passed the used products on to friends, family, charity or reuse local events. Slightly lower percentage always or often repaired damaged products and used them until can't be repaired.

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We could say that the most frequent activities, were those activities that we could call “every day practices”, that are well known, do not require additional knowledge or engagement. Far less popular among Hungarians turned out to be, more engaging activity like making compost with the food waste at home.

Hungarian interviewees were relatively less active in their **before purchase behaviour**. Despite the fact that in recent years in Hungary have been undertaken many actions and projects aimed at increasing consumers knowledge and awareness on sustainable production, making information much more available, relatively small percentage of Hungarian consumers made an effort to look for it.



Over two-fifths of Hungarian consumers had not effectively looked into the behavior of companies. 24% never and one-quarter (25%) rarely, made an effort to search information about ecological and ethical aspects of the companies’ activity. At the other end of the scale, only 3% did it always. However it is worth stressing, that almost one-quarter did it often. The most common response was “sometimes” (14,6%).



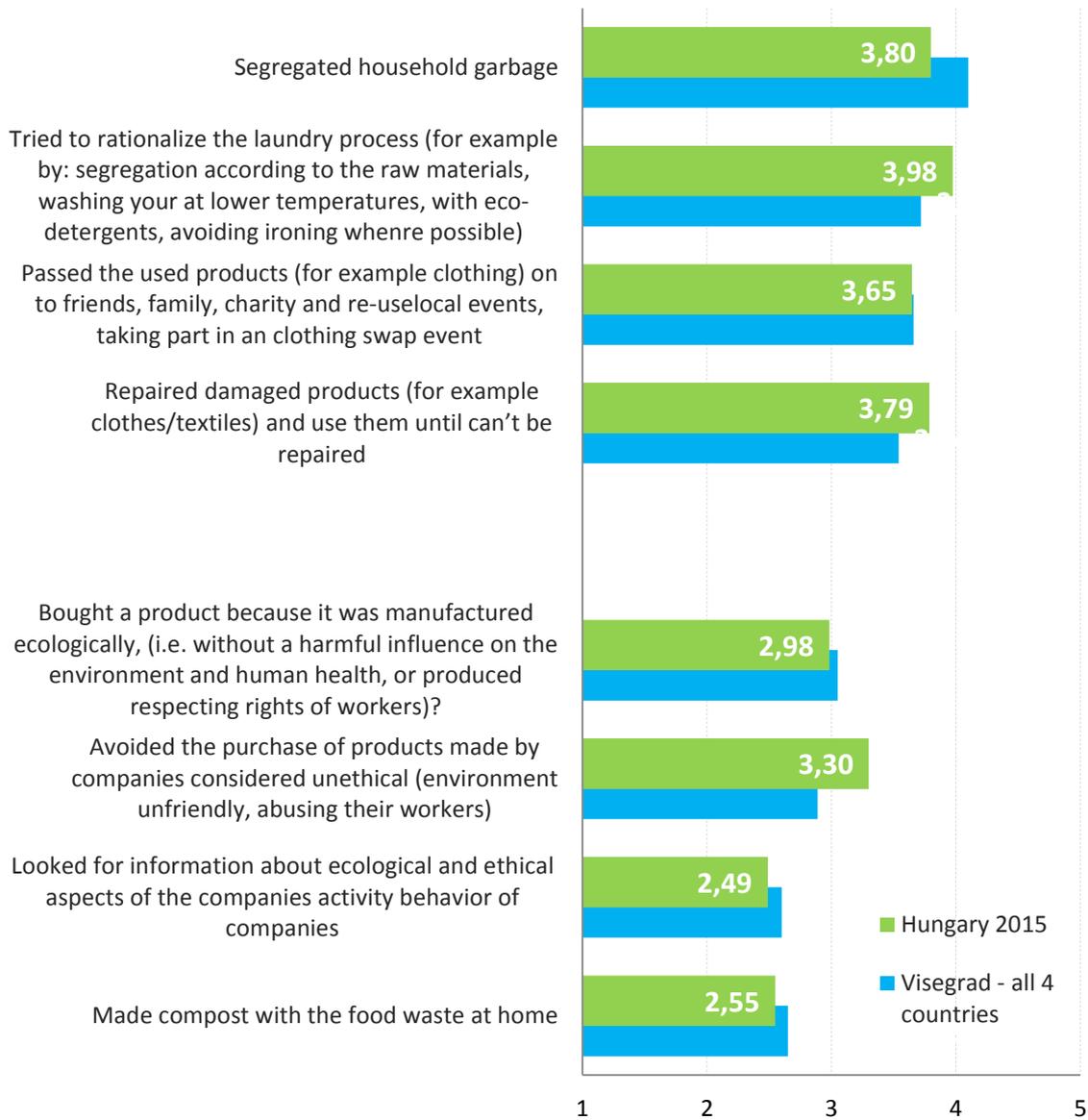
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Sustainable consumption which refers to buying things that are made in a more sustainable manner (without harm to or exploitation of humans, animals or the natural environment) can take the following forms [8]:

- Positive buying — favouring more sustainable products and businesses that operate on principles based on benefit for the greater good rather than self-interest.
- Moral boycott – avoidance of particular products, services and companies that are deemed to follow unsustainable practices

Looking at the survey results we can notice that Hungarian consumers more frequently manifest positive buying behaviour.

**Past behaviours**



Comparing the mean score of sustainable consumption in Hungary vs. All 4V countries we can see no clear differentiation. Only in case of three statements there were very slight differences. Hungarian consumers were a little bit more active regarding: segregation of household garbage and checking up the information about the behavior of companies before buying their products and a little less active in making compost with the food waste at home.

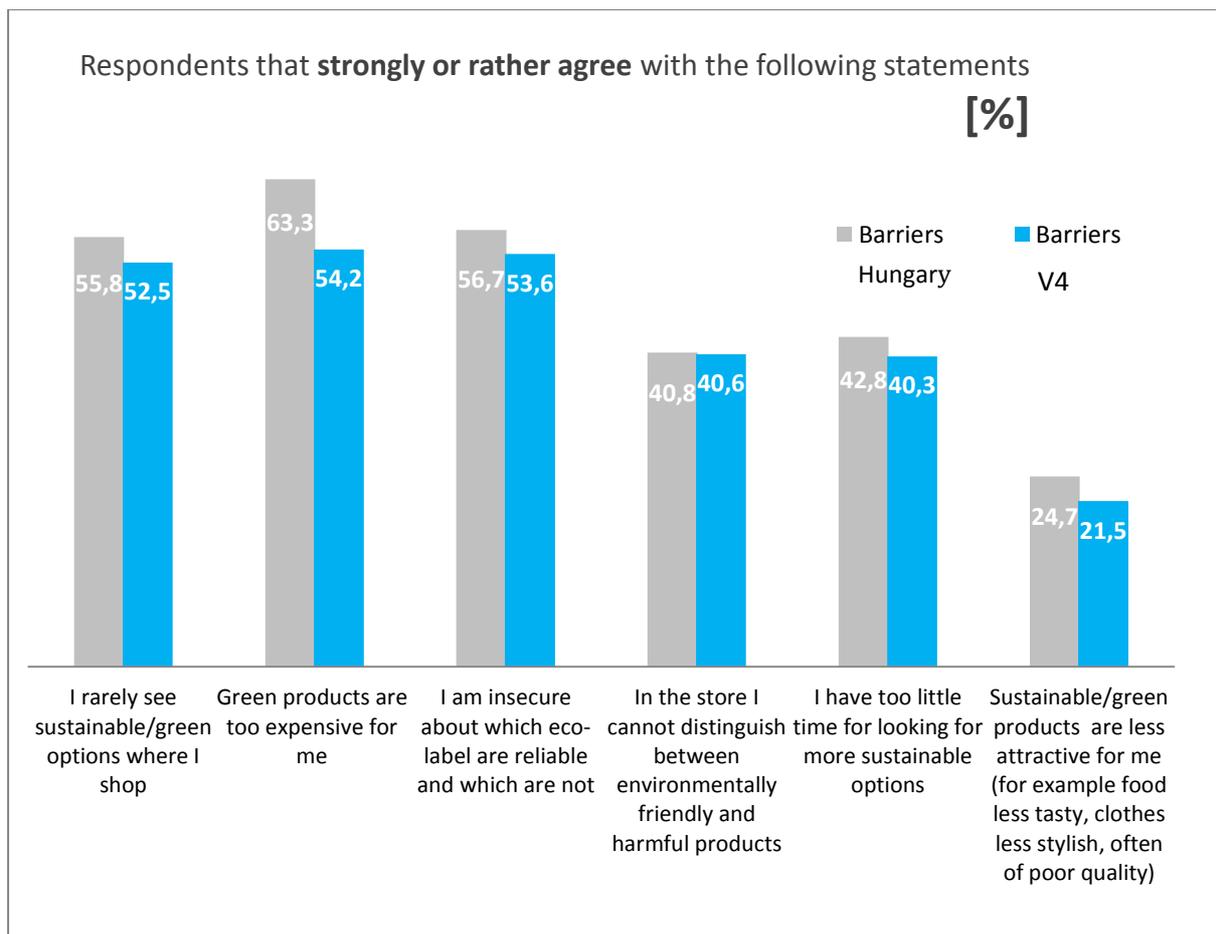


## Barriers

Another important aim of the survey was to identify the main barriers to the introducing more sustainable consumption patterns and therefore development of “eco market”.

Respondents were asked how much do they agree or disagree with the statements concerning following sustainable consumption barriers:

- Difficulties to distinguish between sustainable and unsustainable products
- Lack of confidence in the eco-labels
- Higher price of sustainable products
- Lack of time for searching more sustainable options
- Insufficient availability of the sustainable products
- Unsatisfactory attractiveness of sustainable products



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For Hungarian respondents, as opposed to the V4 average sample, the biggest barrier is insufficient availability of the sustainable products – more than 6 in 10 interviewees agree (strongly or rather) that they rarely see sustainable or green options where they shop. Next in the line, were: too high price of sustainable products and lack of confidence in the eco-labels. Well over half of Hungarian consumers agreed that green products are too expensive for them (63%) and that they are insecure about which eco-label are reliable and which are not (57%). The least important barrier turned out to be unsatisfactory attractiveness of sustainable products.

#### Highlights:

For Hungarian consumers the **biggest barrier** is

- **too high price** of sustainable products and

Then:

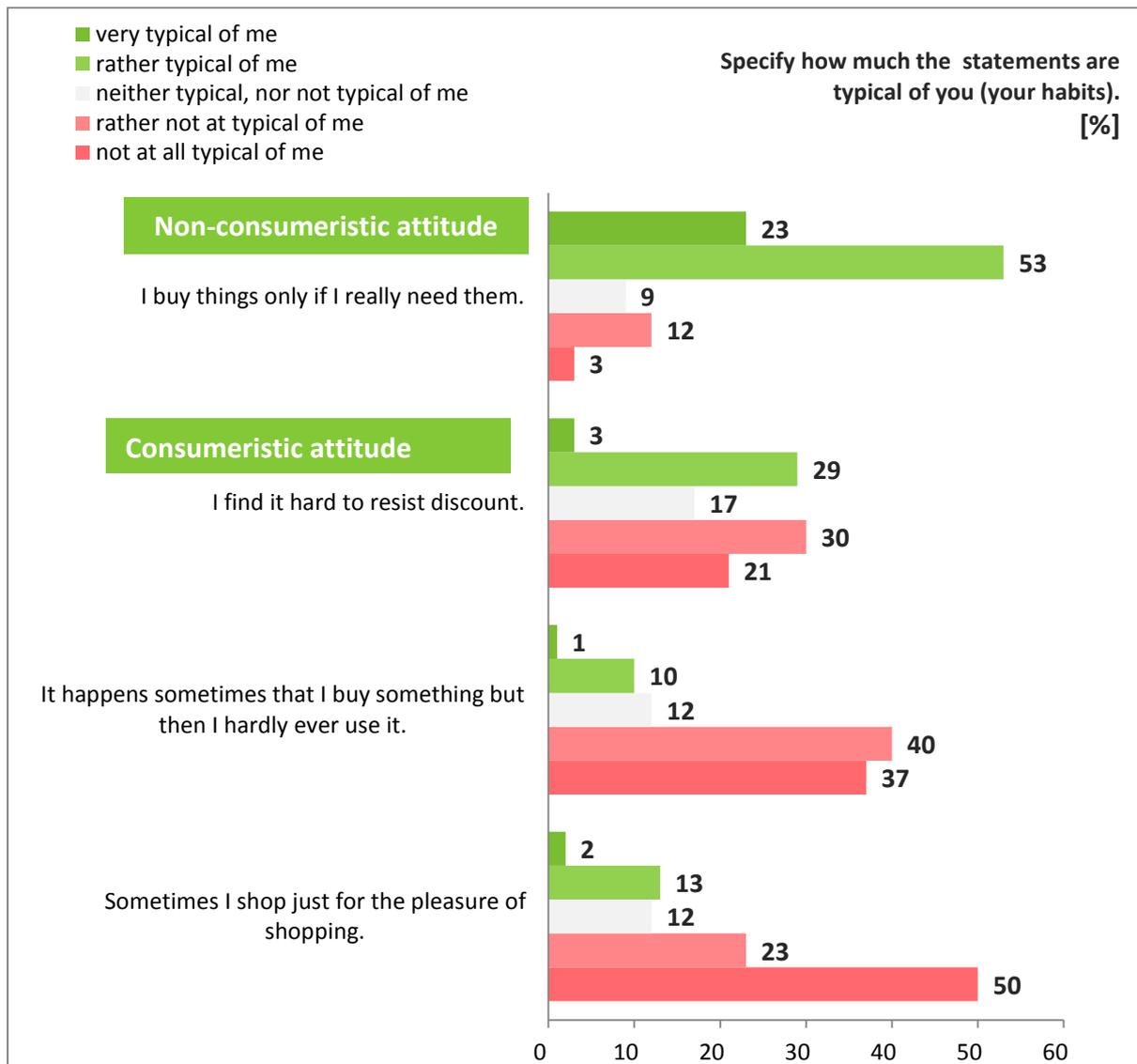
- **lack of confidence** in the eco-labels
- **insufficient availability** of the sustainable products.

The **least important barrier** turned out to be:

- **unsatisfactory attractiveness** of sustainable products

## Consumerism in Hungary

The gradual environmental degradation, the shrinking of non-renewable resources, the falling quality of life and increasingly common cases of unethical behaviour were all directly or indirectly arising from snowballing consumption [8]. It was therefore important to see to what extent Hungarian consumers manifest these negative behaviors expressed through unreasonably high consumption level known as consumerism.



A large majority of Hungarian respondents manifests rather non-consumeristic attitude, declaring, that they buy things only when they really need them. However, this may arise not so much from a conscious opposition to consumerism but rather the economic limitations.

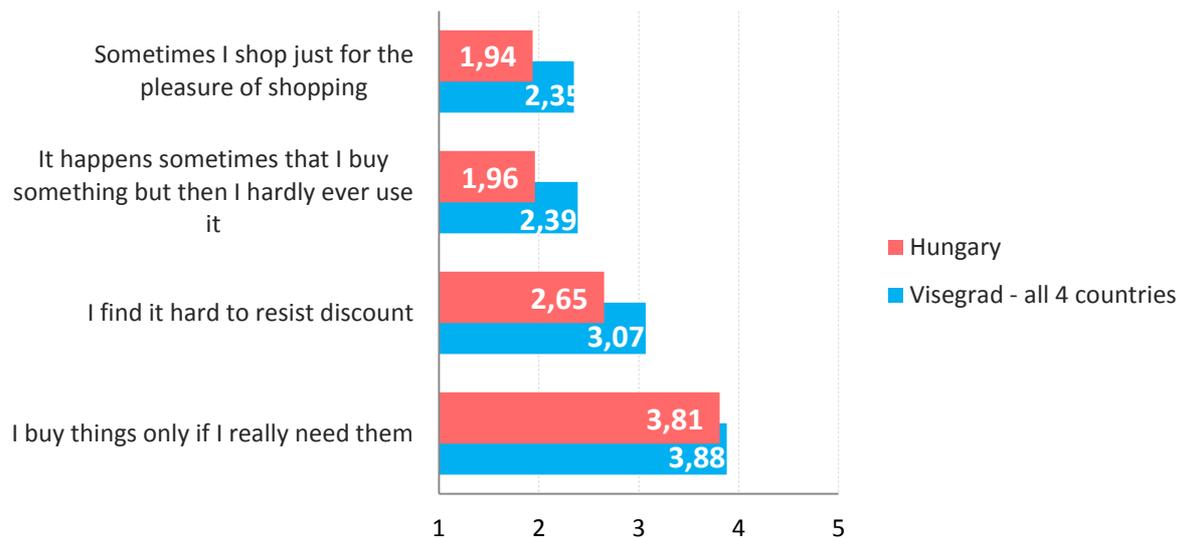
The most typical consumeristic behavior of Hungarian respondents turned out to be difficulties in resisting discounts over a third of Hungarian consumers admitted that they find it hard to resist discount, however almost the same percentage was of the opposite opinion.

Roughly half of Hungarian consumers felt that consumeristic behaviours such as: shopping just for pleasure or buying products that are hardly ever used, are not typical of them. Just over a quarter had the opposite view.

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Hungarian consumers do not differ substantially from V4 consumers when it comes to behaviours such as buying things only when there is a real need or finding it hard to resist a discount. However the other two, more consumeristic behaviours, like: shopping just for pleasure or buying product that is not used afterwards, seem to be more typical for Hungarian vs. V4 sample.

## 5-very typical of me; 1 - not at all typical of me



### Highlights:

Hungarian respondents manifests **rather non-consumeristic attitude**, declaring in great majority, that the buy things only when they really need them

The question is to what extend this attitude arise from a conscious opposition to consumerism and to what extend form the economic limitations.

The most typical consumeristic behavior for Hungarian respondents turned out to be **difficulties in resisting discounts.**

The consumeristic behaviours, like: shopping just for pleasure or buying product that is not used afterwards, seem to be more typical for Hungarian vs. V4 sample.

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### About the Fund

The International Visegrad Fund is an international organization based in Bratislava founded by the governments of the Visegrad Group (V4) countries—the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Republic of Poland, and the Slovak Republic—in Štiřín, Czech Republic, on June 9, 2000

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