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YOUTH STUDY CZECHIA

SECURE PRESENCE, CHALLENGING FUTURE

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CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
2. INTRODUCTION	8
3. METHODOLOGY	10
4. BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS	12
5. CZECH YOUTH AND EDUCATION	16
6. EMPLOYMENT AND MOBILITY OF CZECH YOUTH	22
7. FAMILY AND FRIENDS	28
8. GENERAL VALUES, ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF CZECH YOUTH	32
9. POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND PARTICIPATION OF CZECH YOUTH	42
10. CONCLUSIONS	52
11. FOOTNOTES	54
12. BIBLIOGRAPHY	56
13. LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	60
14. ABOUT FES YOUTH STUDIES	64

1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study focuses on the youngest generation of Czech citizens by exploring a broad range of important elements in their lives, including their current housing situation, educational status, life ambitions, and opinions on politics and political participation. This study is inspired by a slate of similar surveys of youth in other European countries over the last couple of years. Czech youth were surveyed simultaneously with youth peers from other countries of the *Visegrád* group (V4 - Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary) and from the three Baltic states in April, June and July 2021.

Both quantitative – surveying 1,500 respondents 15–29 years of age through online questionnaire – and qualitative – conducting three focus groups and ten in-depth interviews – methods were used.

MAIN SURVEY FINDINGS

- The long-run demographic development of Czech society becomes evident when looking at the proportion and number of the Czech youth. The share of Czechs aged 15–29 years is in a long-term decline, which contributes to the overall ageing of the Czech population.
- The Czech labour market and employment situation create a mostly secure and stable environment for most of the Czech youth rather than being a source of discontent we see in the southern European countries. However, there are still important setbacks regarding the Czech labour market with the most distinctive being comparatively lower wages and wide offer of low-skill jobs.
- Majority of young Czechs live with their original family. The share of youth living single or with their partner increases with progressing age. Household composition of Czech youth influences their ability to secure economic stability. Almost 90 per cent of youth living with both parents are provided with means for a comfortable life. This is compared to households of single youth or led by a single father, which secure a comfortable life for only about 57 per cent.
- Most Czech youth are generally satisfied and content with their current living situation. Satisfaction with family life varies by the structure of household; the most content are those living either with their partner or with both their parents.
- Czech educational system conserves and reproduces hereditary social capital and hierarchy to a significant extent. Parental educational attainment plays a substantial role in shaping the educational trajectory of Czech youth. Czech youth with highly educated parents are both more likely to further continue their studies and to obtain university education themselves.
- In terms of employment, many Czech youth report working in a position or profession that is different or subpar to what they studied and/or trained for. Only one quarter of Czech youth has a job that matches their previous studies. One-third of Czech youth also report working in a position that requires a lower level of formal education than they actually possess.

- Czech youth see little connection between their personal, individual success and how their society fares overall. For Czech youth, personal success in the future is possible despite a perceived overall worsening of the societal situation.
- Czech youth are mostly concerned with pursuit of individualistic goals and aspirations. Civic actions or initiatives and participation in politics are largely seen as unimportant by Czech youth; establishing one's independence and securing a successful career are seen as far more important life goals.
- Pollution and climate change, social injustice and worries related to a global pandemic situation scored highest among the tested threats for Czech youth. Young Czech women are significantly more likely than men to express worries about being victims of physical violence.
- Czech youth are exceptionally disconnected from religion and the political party system in the country. While in many other areas the beliefs and opinions of youth across the V4 countries are very much alike, Czech youth is a stark outlier from the rest of the region's youth population when it comes to religious matters.
- Czech youth have very little interest in politics, do not want to take political functions, and largely avoid discussing it; additionally, very few young people believe that the interests of youth are well represented in Czech national politics.
- Czech youth stand firmly in favour of both the European Union and NATO. Opposition to the EU is exceptionally low among the Czech youth, especially when compared to Czech society's overall ambivalent stance towards the EU.
- Distrust towards all national and international institutions increases with age within the group of Czech youth; especially so in the case of the Czech parliament, domestic media and the European Union.
- Despite the low level of youth relating to the current state of public and political affairs, there is a substantial support towards more possibilities of speaking out for young people in politics. Less than half a year before Czech parliamentary elections, Czech youth's intent to vote was higher than the actual youth turnout in the previous parliamentary elections in 2017.



2

INTRODUCTION

The Czech research team of STEM, Institute of Empirical Research for Democracy seated in Prague, presents the final report of the Czech branch of multi-country research focused on youth of Central Europe and Baltic states (Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia). This country report concentrates on describing and analysing the population of young Czech people. When making the comparison, the study mostly narrows to the geographically and historically proximate group of *Visegrád* countries of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary (abbreviated as V4). The report was created on account of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and according to its guidelines.

WHY FOCUS ON THIS PARTICULAR SEGMENT OF THE CZECH POPULATION?

The generation explored in this survey will form the productive executive core of the Czech society in the mid twenty-first century; as such it is destined to face major domestic and global challenges in the upcoming decades. First, the Czech population is ageing, and this second demographic transition is going to create a structural demand for a substantial reform or increased financing for the Czech pension system. Climate change and the green transformation are prime examples of inevitable global challenges facing Czech youth. Other areas, such as technological development, aftermath effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Czech health system or any new pandemics, are yet to be explored and show their potential benefits and costs. It is therefore crucial to better understand the beliefs and behaviour of present-day Czech youth – this comprehensive report contributes to this goal.

3

METHODOLOGY

The target population for the Czech Republic were citizens aged 15 to 29 who have access to the Internet and are conversant in Czech. The sample of 1,500 respondents was drawn from the IPSOS Online Access Panel. It was quota sampled according to age, gender and region in order to achieve a sample that reflects the target population in regard to these characteristics. These central socio-demographics had been pre-defined so the respondents could be targeted directly via email.

Data collection took place between 10 June 2021 and 20 July 2021. The interviews were conducted online by IPSOS. The questionnaire was provided by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in English and translated into Czech by IPSOS. The survey had a final median length of 18 minutes.

Although the sample was carefully constructed to meet the population strata of age, gender and region, some minor discrepancies from the optimal structure nevertheless occurred. By weighting, the structure of the unweighted sample was adjusted to the official data regarding age, gender and region¹.

QUALITATIVE FIELDWORK

The qualitative fieldwork consisted of n=10 in-depth interviews and n=3 focus groups. For the focus groups, we conducted an age split to best display the relevant life circumstances:

- 15–18 y. o.: school education, graduation and first decision-making processes regarding choice of future education and profession
- 19–24 y. o.: voting age, first steps to get more independent by moving out of parent's home
- 25–29 y. o.: university graduation, entering the job market and start of family planning

Throughout the sample we recruited a mix of gender, living situation and education/working status.

For the research in the Czech Republic, we focused on three sample points: Prague, Ostrava and Ústí nad Labem; 50 per cent of the interviews took place with respondents from Prague, the remaining 50 per cent were split between Ostrava and Ústí nad Labem. The local research team recommended not mixing the different sample points as part of the focus groups to understand regional differences better and ensure a smooth recruitment process. Thus, FG 1, aged 15–18 y. o., took place with respondents from Prague, FG 2, aged 19–24 y. o., took place with respondents from Ostrava and the surrounding areas, and FG 3, aged 25–29 y. o., took place with respondents from Ústí n. Labem and the surrounding areas.

Fieldwork was conducted between 12 and 19 April 2021. All interviews and focus groups were conducted online via the platform MS Teams. The average duration of interviews was 60 minutes, and the average duration of focus groups was 90 minutes. All participants signed a consent form concerning their participation and data protection. Each interview and each focus group were recorded and a transcript was produced. *(As reported and conducted by IPSOS.)*

4

BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTER- ISTICS AND TRENDS

This report uses the term “Czech youth” to refer to citizens of the Czech Republic between 15 and 29 years of age. As described in the methodological section, the survey sample of Czech youth is representative of the population of Czech youth in terms of age, gender and region of residence.

In general, this age group consists of people who are at the start of the process of growing up, others who are currently exploring a way of independence from their parental family and the last set who are finishing their transition from original to own household or to a new family, even. Such a composition influences many aspects of lives of these young people and often happens to be the decisive factor in shaping the well-being and opinions of subgroups of youth.

AGE STRUCTURE

There are some 1.6 million Czechs aged 15–29 years, which represents 15 per cent of the Czech Republic’s total population. The average age within the group of Czech youth is 22.6 (median age being 23), which is well in line with the age structures from the other countries surveyed. As noted by the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO), the share of Czechs under 29 years of age (including those under 15 years) is in a long-term decline, which contributes to the general ageing of the Czech population (Czech Statistical Office, 2017).

The share of Czechs under 29 years of age is in long-term decline, which contributes to the general ageing of the Czech population.

For the purpose of a more nuanced differentiation based on age, Czech youth were divided into the following three sub-groups:

- Youngest Czech youth aged 15–18 years who represent 24 per cent of Czech youth.
- Czech youth aged 19–24 years who represent 36 per cent of Czech youth.
- Czech youth aged 25–29 years who represent 40 per cent of Czech youth.

TYPE OF PLACE OF RESIDENCE

A full 42 per cent of Czech youth describe their place of residence as “urban” with a further 16 per cent indicating that their place of residence is “more urban than rural.” Less than one-fifth (18 per cent) of Czech youth describe their hometown as “rural” and a further 12 per cent indicate that their place of residence is “more rural than urban.” This is very much in line with the broader patterns in the overall Czech population: 43 per cent of Czechs report living in a city with more than 20,000 citizens while only 17 per cent of the Czech society lives in a municipality with less than 1,000 citizens (Czech Statistical Office, 2021a).

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The analysis of educational attainment of Czech youth has to account for the obvious caveat that the academic career of many young Czechs is far from finished and thus the educational structure is inherently incomplete. Still, the interviewed Czech youth were asked about their current educational status, which is a more precise measure than completed educational attainment alone.

Some 36 per cent of Czech youth report that they are not in any sort of education or training at the moment. A further 27 per cent are still enrolled in high school or vocational school while 29 per cent are studying at university at the moment.

In terms of the educational attainment of the parents of Czech youth, there are few significant differences between the attainment levels of mothers and fathers in the generation of parents of Czech youth. Among the parents’ generation, approximately half has vocational or secondary school education and quarter some form of university studies. Mothers of Czech youth are little more likely than fathers to have attended secondary school of university-preparatory type while the overall share of parents with no formal education or only primary school is very low at 5 per cent.

HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

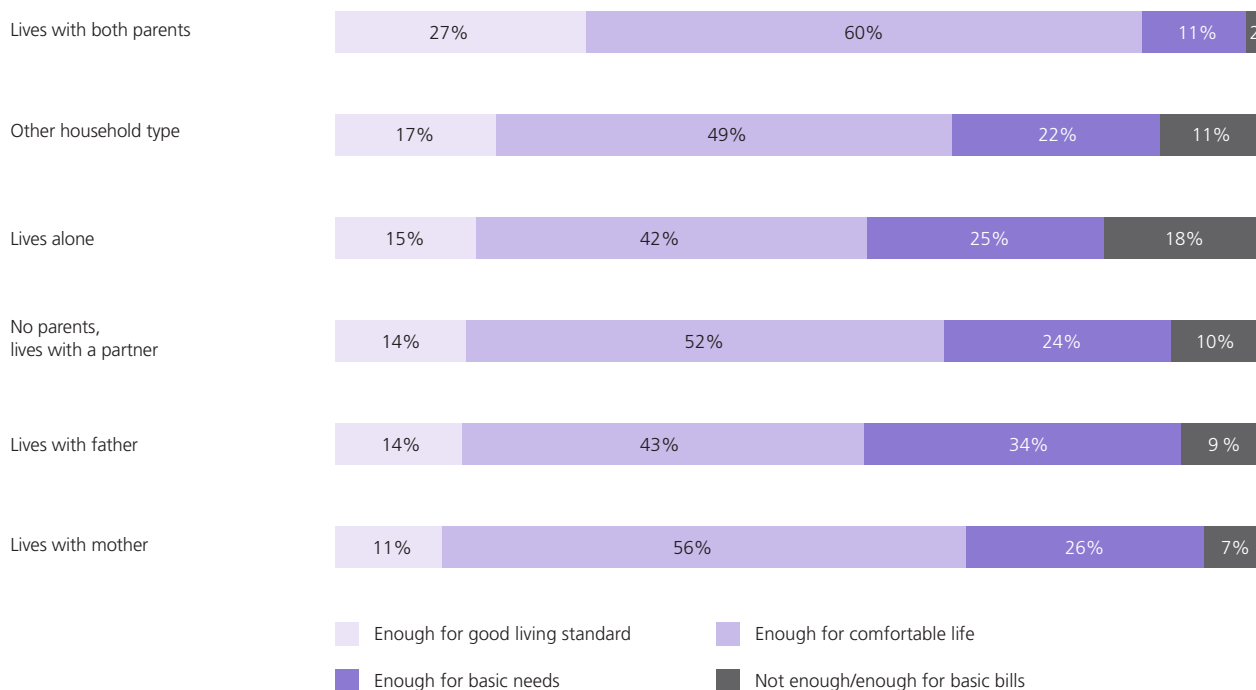
Little less than a half of Czech youth (44 per cent) live with neither their mother nor their father. Further, 37 per cent of Czech youth share their household with their siblings and one-third of Czech youth cohabitates with their partners (these are not exclusive, e.g. one can share household with both their parents and their partner). Some 11 per cent of Czech youth already have children in their household. This share is naturally significantly higher among the oldest segment of Czech youth aged 25–29 years – some 23 per cent of them already have kids at home. The average age of young Czechs living outside their original family is 25.4 years (compared to 22.6 years average of the whole sample). This figure is in accordance with last year's Eurostat findings where the estimated average age of young Czechs leaving the parental household reached 26.0 years with prospected decline (Eurostat, 2021).

Less than half of Czech youth live with neither of their parents. Czech youth also leave their original households at a later stage of life, 25 years old on average, than their V4 peers who leave their original families on average at 23 years of age.

HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL SITUATION

When assessing the financial situation of Czech youth, it is important to keep in mind that some 56 per cent of Czech youth still live with at least one of their parents. Nearly one-fifth (19 per cent) of Czech youth indicated that their household is enjoying a “good living standard.” General economic condition of a household relates to its composition; the most stable arrangement being – as expected – original household of the young person with both parents present. Such a household provides comfortable life for 87 per cent and good living standard for above a quarter of youth coming from such background. (Figure 1)

FIGURE 1: HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC CONDITION OF CZECH YOUTH BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE (%)



Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021.

Any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown.

Household composition influences its ability to secure economic stability; almost 90 per cent of youth living with both parents are provided with means for a comfortable life compared to households of lone youth or led by a single father which secure a comfortable life for about 57 per cent.

A majority (54 per cent) of Czech youth indicated that their household is quite well off but unable to buy more expensive items (a new car, for example) as easily. Further 6 per cent of Czech youth said that their household can afford to cover only basic bills and food while 1 per cent of Czech youth live in households that do not have enough money even for that.

The household financial situation trends of Czech youth are largely reflected in the broader population data where one fifth of Czech population indicates that their household is “well or very well off” while 18 per cent report being poor.²

MAIN FINDINGS

- The share of young Czechs between 15 and 29 years of age is in a long-term decline, which contributes to the general ageing of the Czech population.
- Less than half of Czech youth live in a household without either of their parents. Czech youth also leave their original households at a later stage of life than their V4 peers (25 and 23 years, respectively).
- Household composition influences its ability to secure economic stability; almost 90 per cent of youth living with both parents are provided with means for a comfortable life compared to households of lone youth or single-father-led households which secure a comfortable life for only 57 per cent of Czech youth.

5

CZECH YOUTH AND EDUCATION

The system of education – being one of the first societal structures an individual becomes a part of and has to handle – is expected to fulfil many roles and duties of the society it services. Apart from transition of knowledge and honing of social skills, one of its main tasks in modern and postmodern democracies is to embody the meritocratic ideals and mechanisms societies (wish to) pursue. In theory, the educational system should provide an individual with equal opportunities and navigate them to achieve the best personal development and the most suitable position in society. This theoretical frame has been constantly questioned and tested by sociologists and other scientists, e.g. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) or Mijs (2016). Meritocracy through education is arguably seen as more of an ideal or myth our societies follow; contemporary research suggests that the educational systems tend to reproduce much of the social structure and hierarchy, see e.g. Themelis (2008). This survey indicates that Czech educational system works to a remarkable extent as such a reproducer of social capital.

GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND PERCEPTION OF CORRUPTION

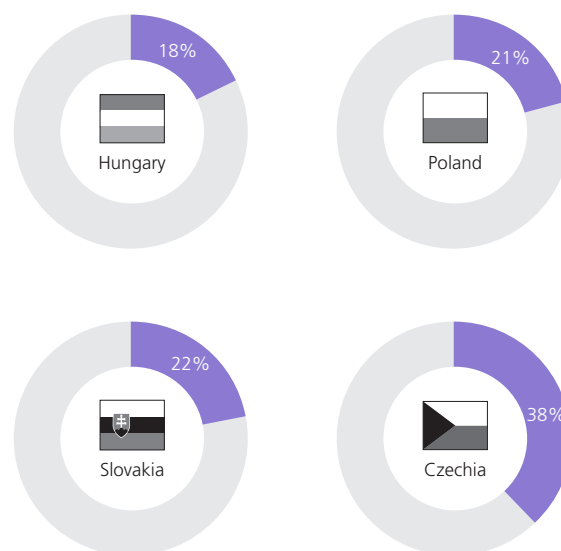
Some 38 per cent of Czech youth are “mostly” or “very” satisfied with the overall quality of education in the Czech Republic. The average corresponding share of youth satisfied with their country’s educational system in the other V4 countries is only 21 per cent. Only 6 per cent of Czech youth are “not satisfied” at all with the quality of the education in the country. These findings are in line with a survey carried out by People in Need on the population of Czech high school students aged 15–20 years (Jeden svět na školách, 2020). Only 4 per cent of surveyed Czech high-schoolers indicated worst levels of satisfaction with their school on a comparable 5-point scale. Moreover, the People in Need survey found that the school satisfaction among Czech high school students is significantly higher than among the overall population of Czech youth. A full 61 per cent of Czech high school students were “very” or “mostly” satisfied with their educational experiences compared to the aforementioned 38 per cent for the overall population of Czech youth aged 15–29 as seen in our data.

This difference might be explained by multiple factors. For example, the People in Need survey assesses only the opinions of Czech students who are presently attending high school whereas the current study accounts for opinions of Czech youth regardless of whether they are in school at the moment or not. Thus, currently enrolled high school students might be more likely to evaluate their educational experience in a more favourable light.

Czech youth are – with 38 per cent satisfied – the most content with the general quality of education among Visegrád countries.

Further, the oldest segment of Czech youth aged 25–29 years is far more likely to agree with the statement that there is corruption in the Czech educational system and that grades and exams can be “bought.” If younger high school students are less likely to perceive the Czech educational system as corrupt that would help explain why they view the overall educational system more positively than their older peers.

FIGURE 2: HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU GENERALLY WITH THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN [YOUR COUNTRY]? By V4 countries, share of “Mostly satisfied” and “Very satisfied” answers (%)

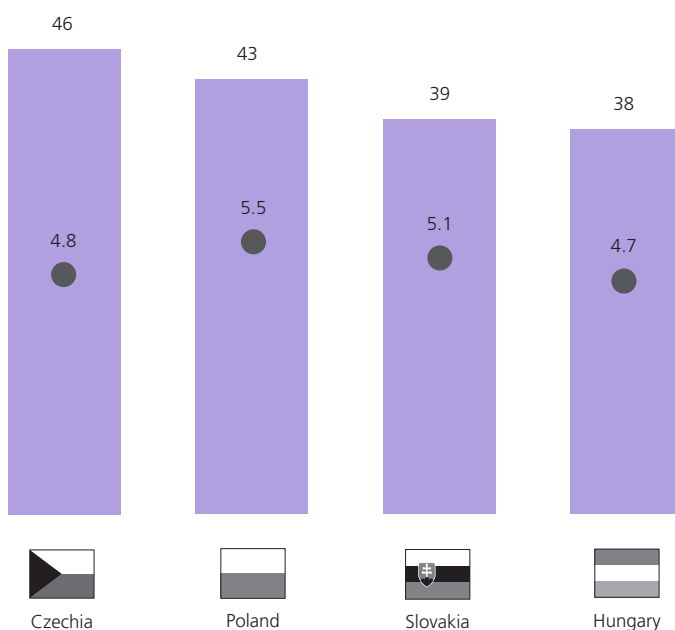


Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021.
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COVID-19 DISRUPTIONS IN THE EDUCATION OF CZECH YOUTH

The global pandemic of Covid-19 has significantly disrupted the educational experiences of youth worldwide and Czech youth are no exception in this regard. The single most visible impact of the pandemic on the Czech school system was the closure of schools for a total duration of 47 weeks, which was one of the longest periods of school closures in both the EU and the world (UNESCO, 2021). During this time Czech universities and schools shifted to online instruction/learning. When compared to other V4 countries, Czech (and Slovak) youth indicate a strong preference for classroom learning with only 9 per cent of them unequivocally in favour of distance learning.

FIGURE 3: NUMBER OF WEEKS OF SCHOOL CLOSURES DUE TO PANDEMICS AND CLASSROOM/DISTANCE LEARNING PREFERENCE IN V4 COUNTRIES



● Learning preference (1 = classroom learning, 10 = distance e-learning)

Source: UNESCO Global monitoring of school closures 2021, FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021. Any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown.

Czech youth have lost a total of 47 weeks of classroom learning due to the pandemic-related restrictions since 2020.

This strong preference for in-person teaching among Czech youth is not driven by dearth of equipment necessary for meaningful and effective participation in online learning (computer, stable internet connection, etc.). In fact, full 84 per cent of Czech youth say that they are at least “well equipped” for online schooling. Further, Czech youth living in rural areas do not report having insufficient equipment for online education (think of potential internet access issues) than their “urban” counterparts.

However, there is a clear link between the financial stability of the households of Czech youth and the availability of equipment needed for online schooling. For example, among the Czech youth whose households are able to purchase whatever is needed for a “good living standard” 71 per cent indicate that they have “all they need” for online schooling. The comparable share of youth fully equipped for online education among those whose households can only afford food, clothes and shoes but not more expensive items is only 40 per cent.

General financial stability of their household affects the readiness and equipment of Czech youth for online schooling.

INTERSHIPS AND STUDYING ABROAD DURING STUDIES

Practicums or internships during studies are frequent among Czech youth with 58 per cent of them indicating they have done it. This share culminates with progressing age groups while there are 70 per cent with this experience among the oldest segment of Czech youth aged 25–29 years, suggesting that university studies present a popular time to pursue internship opportunities for the older members of Czech youth.

While internships during one’s studies are a fairly common experience of Czech youth, going abroad when enrolled in school is rather rare. Only 8 per cent of Czech youth gets to study abroad while studying secondary school and 7 per cent while pursuing university degree. However,

nearly a one-third of Czech youth (32 per cent) aspires to go abroad as part of their studies in the future despite not having yet done so. Thus, while the overall interest in going abroad during studies is certainly present among Czech youth, the much lower shares of those who have actually done so suggest a lack of opportunity or means to pursue these foreign academic experiences. This difference might also be highlighted by the pandemic-related restrictions and concerns.

Over half of Czech youth participated in a practicum or internship during their studies. One-third of them wishes to go abroad when studying, only 8 per cent carried it out during their secondary school studies, however.

PARENTS’ EDUCATION LEVELS AS CO-DETERMINANTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND ASPIRATION OF CZECH YOUTH

The respondents from the ranks of Czech youth were asked not only about their highest educational attainment up to date and their current educational status (enrolled in high school/university, not studying etc.) but also about the highest educational attainment of both parents, respectively. Researchers of social mobility formulated theories strongly linking socio-economic background provided by original family and parental educational attainment with the educational attainment of their children.³ Whether this dynamic of the so-called intergenerational transmission of human capital owes more to selection (parents who have higher education and earn more money will have children who will do so as well, regardless) or causation (being more educated and affluent influences what type of parent one is) is still actively debated (see for example Black et al., 2005). While the data collected from Czech youth cannot answer this broader question of the parent-children educational outcomes nexus, it lends strong support to two major trends.

Firstly, the higher the educational attainment of Czech youth’s parents is, the more likely the youth are to continue advancing through the educational system rather

than cease formal schooling altogether. For example, 16 per cent of Czech youth have obtained secondary education with the *maturita* exam (university-preparatory type of high school) and are *not* continuing their studies. Another 25 per cent of Czech youth have also obtained secondary education with *maturita* but are continuing their studies in one form or another. Comparing these two subgroups according to the combined educational attainment of their parents reveals the strong relationship between parental education and whether or not Czech youth continue in their studies after obtaining university-preparatory education.

Thus, when both parents have vocational or technical secondary school (no *maturita*), the share of the youth who choose to continue their studies after obtaining *maturita* education is 24 per cent, which is almost equal to the share of those who choose to conclude their academic trajectory 25 per cent.⁴ When one of the parents has at least a master's degree or higher, only 7 per cent of youth choose to not continue after their *maturita* exam, while 29 per cent do continue. In the households where both

parents have a master's degree or higher level of educational attainment, a mere 2 per cent of youth choose not to pursue further education after concluding their university-preparatory high school.

Parental educational attainment plays a substantial role in shaping the educational trajectory of Czech youth. Czech youth with highly educated parents is both more likely to further continue their studies and obtain university education themselves.

Secondly, the present data indicate that university-educated parents are significantly more likely to raise children who go on to obtain university education as well. For example, among those Czech households where at least one of the parents has, at most, secondary education with the *maturita* exam, some 22 per cent of youth have at least bachelor's degree. For households where at least one of the parents has a master's degree, the corresponding share of youth with at least bachelor's degree rises to 33 per cent.

TABLE 1: EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF V4 AND CZECH YOUTH BY COMBINED ATTAINMENT OF PARENTS (%)

Column % displayed		Combined attainment of parents									
		one or both parents have no formal education or only went to primary school		one or both parents have finished vocational or technical secondary school		one or both parents have an exam from secondary school		one or both parents have a bachelor's degree		one or both parents have a master's degree or higher	
		V4	CZ	V4	CZ	V4	CZ	V4	CZ	V4	CZ
Educational status	low and not continuing	22	15	4	2	1	2	1	1	1	0
	low and continuing	32	40	16	19	16	20	20	30	22	29
	medium and not continuing	28	20	36	31	31	26	16	16	9	6
	medium and continuing	9	15	26	28	30	33	32	26	31	32
	high and not continuing	7	0	11	12	13	9	16	14	19	13
	high and continuing	3	10	7	8	9	9	15	12	18	20

■ higher than expected; sig. < 0.05 ■ lower than expected; sig. < 0.05

Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021.

It is also important to note that this is most likely an underestimation of the disparities in educational attainment of Czech youth based on their parents' educational attainment. This is the case since the parental education is likely concluded and therefore final, whereas the education of their children (the youth population covered by this survey) is still ongoing. For example, we are unable to see what share of the Czech youth studying in secondary schools will move on to university studies in the future.

In short, the available data shows that intergenerational educational mobility of Czech youth is quite restricted. While this sub-chapter focused exclusively on parental educational attainment and its "sorting" effects on educational trajectories of Czech youth, other recent studies from the Czech Republic stress that there is a broader strong association between social, cultural and human capital of parents and the educational outcomes of their children (Prokop et al., 2020). This suggests that the playing field of education is far from level for Czech youth and that the socio-economic capital of one's parents plays a significant role in determining success in the Czech education system, not just one's will and determination to study on their own. This results in a situation where societal inequalities, including educational ones, are replicated through generational changes in the population. These inequalities in education might not be immovable in the V4 group – Prokop et al. note that Poland has been much more successful at removing the association between household's socioeconomic status and the PISA results of Polish students.

There is a broader strong association between social, cultural and human capital of Czech parents and the educational outcomes of their children.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Czech youth are – with 38 per cent satisfied – the most content with the general quality of education among *Visegrád* countries.
- Czech youth have lost a total of 47 weeks of classroom learning due to the pandemic-related restrictions since 2020, one of the longest periods globally.
- General financial stability of their household affects the readiness and equipment availability of Czech youth for online schooling.
- Over half of Czech youth participated in a practicum or internship during their studies. One-third of them wishes to go abroad when studying, only 8 per cent carried it out during their secondary school studies, however.
- Parental educational attainment plays a substantial role in shaping the educational trajectory of Czech youth. Czech youth with highly educated parents are both more likely to further continue their studies and obtain university education themselves.
- There is a broader strong association between social, cultural and economic capital of parents and the educational outcomes of their children.

6

EMPLOYMENT AND MOBILITY OF CZECH YOUTH

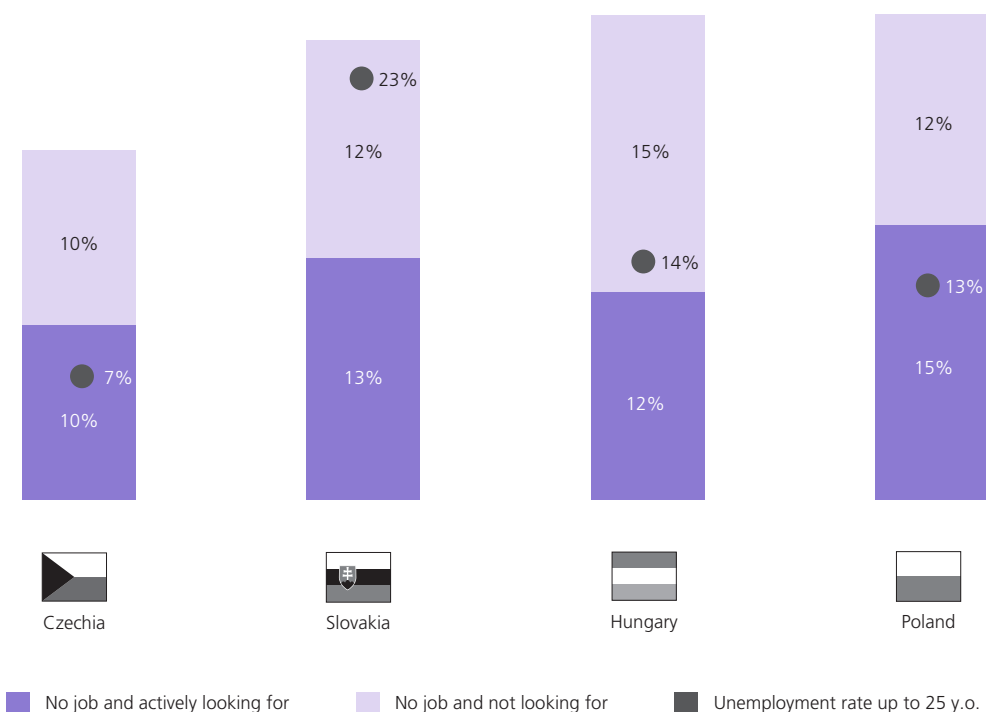
With exceptionally low unemployment rates during the last years (CZSO, 2021b), the Czech labour market has shown a steady demand for employees of any level of skills or career progress. Czech youth have been benefiting from this state and report one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe (Statista, 2021). However, the relatively low unemployment rates of Czech youth belie a more precarious reality of the Czech labour market. For example, compared to their V4 peers, a lower share of Czech youth has permanent full-time work contracts. Further, the levels of skills and/or educational mismatch are relatively high among Czech youth; this means that many young Czechs are working in a profession or field substantially different from the one they studied or trained for.

Czech labour market and employment situation currently create a secure and encouraging environment for most of the Czech youth rather than being a source of insecurities or worries.

Compared to their V4 peers, Czech youth have fewer permanent full-time work contracts and, conversely, take advantage of temporary employment opportunities more often. As noted above, many Czech youth end up working in a profession mostly different in substance than what they have studied or trained for. Czech youth working in the private sector are least likely to indicate that they would like to move into a different sector, while those working in the NGO sector express higher desire to switch.

While Czech youth believe that one's prospect of finding a job is most dependent on educational attainment and expertise, they consider personal connections and acquaintances to be of importance as well. Finally, in line with the low rates of study abroad experiences during studies, very few young Czechs have stayed abroad for extended periods of time and the overall desire to leave the Czech Republic is rather low, especially so among the oldest segment of Czech youth.

FIGURE 4: SHARES OF V4 YOUTH WITH NO JOB BY THEIR ACTIVITY TOWARDS GETTING A JOB AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATES IN V4 COUNTRIES (%)



Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021, Statista Youth unemployment rate in EU member states June 2021. Any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown.

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF CZECH YOUTH AND TIME DEVOTED TO WORK

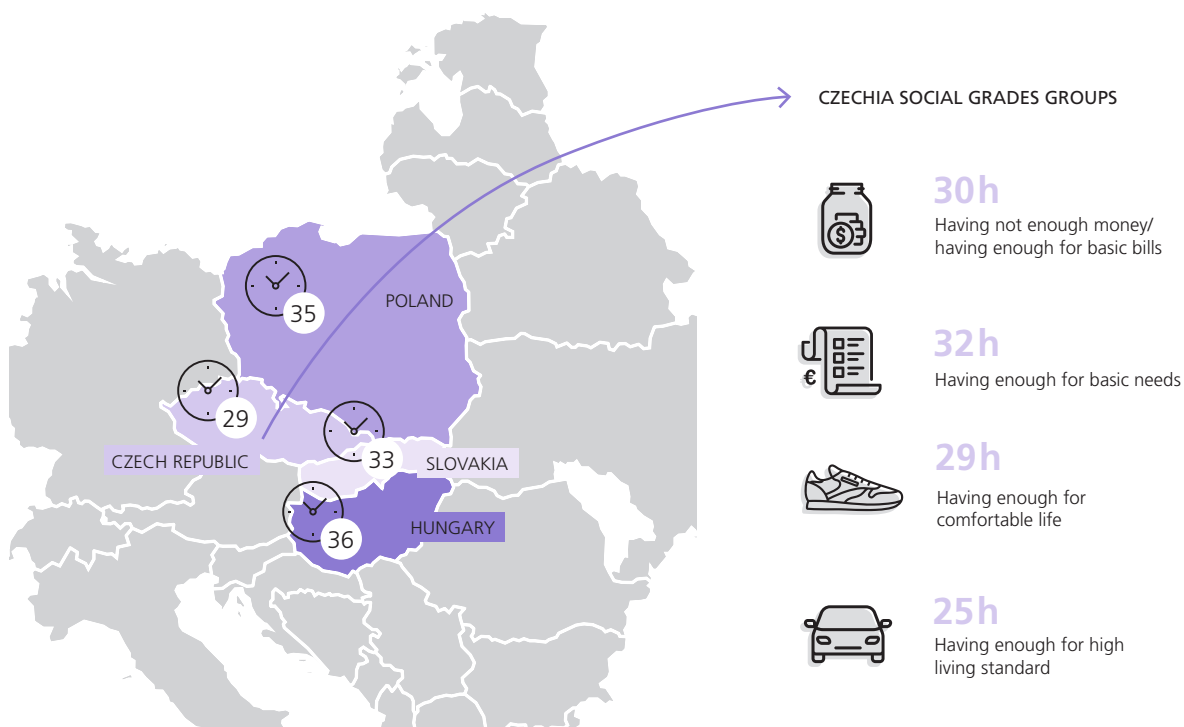
The current employment status of Czech youth is closely tied to age and educational attainment. While about 22 per cent of Czech youth have a permanent contract for a full-time job, this share is 44 per cent among the oldest segment of Czech youth aged 25–29 years. While only 1 per cent of Czechs aged 15–18 have full-time jobs, a full 25 per cent of them partake in occasional jobs, which suggests that flexible, short-term job opportunities are a popular choice among the youngest segment of Czech youth. The youngest of Czech youth also have the highest share – 19 per cent – of those who do not have a job at the moment but are actively looking for one, which indicates that there is a dearth of flexible part time jobs that could be combined with secondary school studies in the Czech Republic.

Flexible, short-term job opportunities are a popular choice among the youngest segment of Czech youth.

In a regional perspective, Czech youth have the lowest share of those in possession of a full-time job with a permanent contract (22 per cent as opposed to the V4 average of 28 per cent). Conversely, temporary contracts for part-time jobs are most common for Czech youth in the V4 group – some 8 per cent of young Czechs have these types of jobs compared to the V4 average of 4 per cent.

The fact that a lower share of Czech youth has full-time work contracts than their peers from other V4 countries translates directly into the number of working hours per week. While the V4 average among youth who reported having at least some type of job (i.e. excluding those who are currently unemployed) stands at 33 working hours per week, Czech youth work on average only 29 hours per week.

FIGURE 5: **HOW MANY HOURS PER WEEK DO YOU WORK ON AVERAGE?**
By V4 countries (hours per WEEK) and by Czech social grade groups (%)



Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021.
Any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown.

Within the group of Czech youth alone, men work 31 hours per week on average, while women work only 26 hours per week on average. There is also a relationship between the wealth of one's household and the number of working hours of Czech youth. While Czech youth work an average of 29 hours per week, among those from households that enjoy a "good living standard" it is only 25 hours per week. This might be related to the fact that, as discussed above, Czech youth from families with higher socio-economic capital will be more likely to pursue advanced studies and less likely to need the extra income that employment brings.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CURRENT FIELD OF WORK AND THE EDUCATION/TRAINING OF CZECH YOUTH

Only little more than one quarter (28 per cent) of Czech youth presently have a job that they have been trained or educated for and a further 43 per cent report working in a profession that is different from what they studied/trained for, which results in the so-called skills/education mismatch. Obtaining advanced university degree significantly increases the odds for Czech youth that they will end up working in a field of their studies. For example, among those Czech youth who have vocational secondary school and are not continuing their studies, two-thirds (66 per cent) of them report that they are not working in their profession. The comparable share among those who obtained bachelor's degree and are not pursuing further studies is only 27 per cent.

Many Czech youth report working in a position or profession that is different from what they studied and/or trained for. Only one quarter of Czech youth has a job that matches their previous studies.

While there is clearly a mismatch between what type of jobs Czech youth studied/trained for versus the jobs they have now, other aspects of the job market are not nearly as lopsided. Nearly half (49 per cent) of Czech youth reports working in a position that is broadly in line with their achieved level of formal education. Further, 33 per cent of Czech youth report working in a position that requires a lower level of formal education than they

possess (overeducation) while only 8 per cent of Czech youth indicate that they have jobs that require higher education than they currently possess. These numbers are largely in line with Rasovec and Vavrinova (2014) who use PIAAC data to measure the educational and skills mismatch in the Czech population and offer breakdowns by age category. Authors of this study observed that the gender aspects of educational mismatch appear to be less pronounced in the Czech Republic than in other countries, which is supported by the current youth data which show that there are no significant differences between men and women in terms of educational mismatch.

A third of Czech youth report working in a position that requires a lower level of formal education than they possess.

In terms of sectoral employment, nearly half of Czech youth (46 per cent) currently works in the private sector, followed by 28 per cent who work in the public sector. Shares of those working in NGOs or international organizations are rather low – 6 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively. When we compare the current employment sector of Czech youth with the sector they would prefer to work in, we find that 60 per cent of those working in the private sector wish to remain in it. For the Czech youth currently working in the public sector, about 47 per cent are content to stay in it while 29 per cent would prefer moving into the private sector. Finally, this sector-specific contentment is the lowest among those Czech youth who work in the NGO sector as only 37 per cent of them would prefer working in NGO sphere in the future and the other 29 per cent would like to move into the private sector. This dynamic might be a function of the fact that in the Czech Republic salaries in the NGO sector are generally lower than in the private sector and the nature of NGO contracts tend to be more precarious.⁵

FACTORS INFLUENCING JOB PROSPECTS FOR CZECH YOUTH

In terms of factors increasing one's chances to find employment, Czech youth are overall hopeful that intrinsic qualities play a larger role than knowing the right people at the right place. For example, a full 81 per cent of Czech youth believe that expertise is mostly or very important factor in finding a job. Further 73 per cent believe the same about one's level of education. Among men, some 13 per cent believe that education is not an important factor in finding a job, while among women only 5 per cent believe the same. A similar gender gap was observed in the assessment of how important expertise is for finding a job. This is in line with a number of international studies that found that women (though drawn from the entire adult population, not just youth subsection) are much less likely to apply for positions where they do not meet all of the formal requirements listed (Mohr, 2014).

Both education and expertise as well as personal connections and acquaintances are considered important when finding a new job by Czech youth.

While personal connections are not among the top factors listed as crucial for securing a job by Czech youth, they are still considered very important. For example, nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of Czech youth believe that having good acquaintances is mostly or very important in finding a job and further 50 per cent believe the same about having connections to people in power. The biggest regional difference between Czech youth and their V4 peers lies in the fact that Czech youth are far more sceptical about the importance of political party membership for finding a job. In the Czech Republic, some 72 per cent of youth do not think that party membership really plays a role in one's job prospects, which is significantly higher than the V4 average of 61 per cent.

OPINIONS ON LEAVING THE CZECH REPUBLIC

In line with the above-discussed low rates of study abroad experiences, the overall rate of extended stays abroad is rather low among Czech youth. For example, only 12 per cent of Czech youth have been outside the Czech

Republic for a period longer than six months compared the V4 average of 15 per cent. Further, only 19 per cent of Czech youth indicate strong or very strong desire to emigrate to another country for a period longer than 6 months. The urge to emigrate from the Czech Republic is significantly lower among the oldest segment of Czech youth, which suggests that the older young Czech people have more connections and ties (work, family, etc.) to the Czech Republic, which decreases their appetite for moving abroad for longer periods of time. Among those Czech youth who indicated at least some interest in moving abroad, the USA, Germany, Spain, Canada, Italy and the Netherlands are among the most often cited destinations.

Willingness to emigrate is very low among Czech youth and diminishes further with age as older young Czech people create more connections and ties.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Czech labour market and employment situation currently create a secure and encouraging environment for most of the Czech youth rather than being a source of insecurities or worries.
- Flexible, short-term job opportunities are a popular choice among the youngest segment of Czech youth, most of whom are still pursuing secondary education.
- Many Czech youth report working in a position or profession that is different from what they studied and/or trained for. Only a quarter of Czech youth has a job that matches their previous studies.
- One-third of Czech youth report working in a position that requires a lower level of formal education than they possess.
- Both education and expertise and personal connections and acquaintances are considered important when finding a new job by Czech youth.
- The willingness to emigrate is very low among Czech youth and diminishes further with age as older young Czech people create more connections and ties.

7

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The family research unit within the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs periodically publishes *The Report on Family* (Národní centrum pro rodinu, 2020). The latest version of this report was published in 2020 and while its focus is the entire Czech society, not just its youth, many of the authors' observations about the rapidly changing status of family and family relationships are directly applicable to the present-day generation of Czech youth – they affect both the family structures of households where Czech youth grow up and the structure of family arrangements that these youth pursue once they leave their household of origin.

The authors of *The Report on Family* note three major changes to the structure and dynamics of Czech families that took place in the last 10 years or so and are therefore of high relevance to the contemporary generation of Czech youth:

- an increasing **diversity in the types of family arrangements** (for example, parents raising children together but not living in the same household or the increased prominence and acceptability of being single),
- emergence of multiple variations of **non-linear pathways** towards achieving family (greater flexibility in terms of professional and academic career options available to both parents),
- increased **instability and fragility** of family structure due to weakening of partner ties and resulting deterioration in relationships between children and their parents.

All of these mean that Czech youth today enter marriages older,⁶ have kids later than their parents⁷ and explore a greater variety of life and career options than their parents did (co-housing, frequent shifting of jobs and studies and greater overall flexibility in terms of one's career). This was also observed in the qualitative interviews:

“Before, life was more predetermined – at 20 y. o. people started families, had children because there was nothing else to do.”

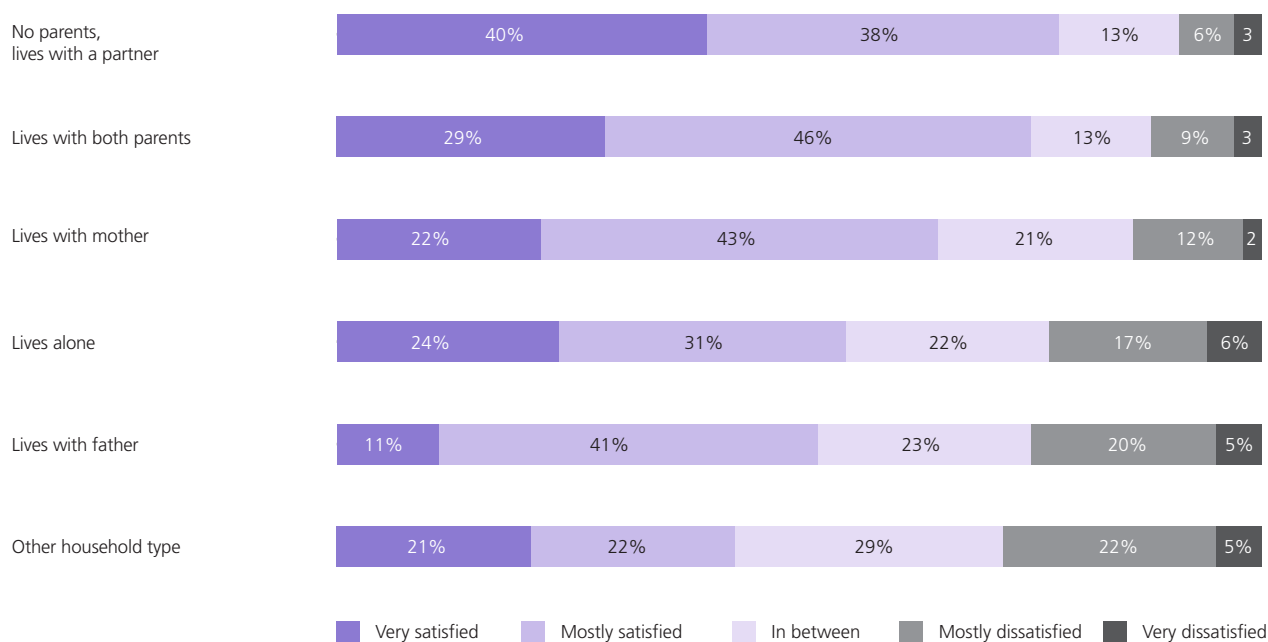
(IDI, Male, 25–29 y. o., CZ)

Czech youth today enter marriages older, have kids later than their parents and explore a greater variety of life and career options than their parents did.

SATISFACTION WITH FAMILY LIFE AND PARENTAL INFLUENCE AMONG CZECH YOUTHS

For Czech youth satisfaction with one's family life correlates fairly strongly and significantly with an overall satisfaction with life ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$); this correlation is stronger in the Czech Republic than in the overall V4 region ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$). Czech youth are rather satisfied with their family life with 70 per cent reporting being “mostly” or “very satisfied”, which is similar to the V4 average 66 per cent. The rates of satisfaction with family life vary to an extent by the structure of household that Czech youth live in. Three-quarters of Czech youth living in a household with both their parents are “mostly” or “very satisfied” with their lives, among those living only with their mother it is 65 per cent, among those living with their partners 78 per cent and among young Czechs living on their own, this satisfaction rate stands at 55 per cent.

FIGURE 6: CZECH YOUTH'S SATISFACTION WITH FAMILY LIFE BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE (%)



Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021.

Note: The data is presented in accordance with the relevant rounding rules. In some cases, original values would not add up to 100% without arbitrary determination, so that original values were kept instead. This explains eventual deviations in the graph.

Satisfaction of Czech youth with family life varies by the structure of household; the most content are those living either with their partner or with both their parents.

Among the Czech youth who live in a household with at least one of their parents, nearly half (45 per cent) reports satisfaction with such an arrangement and agree that it is “the simplest and most comfortable solution”. Parental opposition is much less of an obstacle to leaving a household shared with parents than financial consequences of such a move. Only 5 per cent of Czech youth would prefer living alone but are prevented from doing so by their parents, while 36 per cent cannot live alone due to financial constraints. These worries about the costs of moving out from one’s original household go a long way towards explaining why some 26 per cent of Czech youth aged 25–29 still share household with at least one of their parents.

Over a third of Czech youth cannot live alone due to financial constraints; over one fourth of Czech youth aged 25–29 still share a household with at least one of their parents.

The concerns about the risks of leaving one’s original household are supported by analysis of how well off are the households of Czech youth dependent on the type of household. For example, among those youth who share their household with both of their parents, a full 87 per cent indicate that their household belongs to one of the top two categories in terms of material wealth. Among those youth who share their household with a partner, this share is 66 per cent and among those who live alone, it drops further to 57 per cent.

In terms of the extent of parental influence on important decisions about the lives of Czech youth, some 45 per cent of Czech youth indicate that they make joint decisions with their parents, which is slightly higher than the V4 average of 40 per cent. Another 49 per cent of Czech youth report making important decisions independently of their parents. This share is much higher among the oldest segment of Czech youth aged 25–29 where a full two-thirds (66 per cent) make independent decisions about their lives. There is also a relationship between whether Czech youth live with or without their parents and the extent to which their parents are involved in major decisions concerning their lives. While only 31 per cent of youth living with both

their parents get to decide independently, 73 per cent of those living with their partners (without parents) do so. The comparable share for those Czech youth who live alone is 64 per cent, which suggests that the presence of a stable life partner is a significant factor in removing youth from their parents' orbit in terms of decision-making.

The presence of a stable life partner is a significant factor in removing youth from their parents' orbit in terms of decision-making.

FUTURE FAMILY AND MARITAL PLANS OF CZECH YOUTH

The increasing popularity of singles lifestyle mentioned above is supported by the fact that about half (51 per cent) of Czech youth are currently single. A further 9 per cent of Czech youth are already married, which is below the V4 average of 12 per cent. The older Czech youth are, the higher rates of marriages – among Czech youth aged 25–29, some 18 per cent are already married while further 33 per cent cohabitate with their partner though are not married.

Despite the prevalence of the single lifestyle among Czech youth, being married and having children remains a popular goal for nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) of Czech youth with a further 6 per cent desiring a marriage without children. Young Czech women have a significantly higher preference for marriage in their life than young Czech men (67 per cent of women want to get married compared to 57 per cent of men). Czech youth also have a stronger preference for having children in the future than their V4 peers – 73 per cent of young Czechs would like to have children at some point in their lives compared to a V4 average of 66 per cent.

Slightly over a half of Czech youth are single at the moment but this does not diminish the broad appeal of marriage and having children, which is especially strong among young Czech women.

Young Czech men are more likely than young Czech women to indicate no desire to have children (19 per cent among men versus 14 per cent among women). Among Czech youth who would like to have children, the

average number of preferred children is 2.12, which is well above the Czech Republic's current fertility rate of 1.71 (The World Bank, 2021) and accidentally close to the replacement fertility rate of 2.1 (Britannica, 2021). When asked about preferred age for having their first child, young Czech women indicate age of 27 years while men report 29 years, which is largely in line with previous findings (Národní centrum pro rodinu, 2020). It is also noteworthy that in this open-ended question, "round" and symbolically significant ages of 30 and 35 were listed more frequently than very proximate but "non-round" values, such as 29, 31, 34 and 36.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Czech youth today enter marriage older, have kids later than their parents and explore a greater variety of life and career options than their parents did.
- Czech youths' satisfaction with their family life vary by the structure of household; the most content are those living either with their partner or with both their parents.
- Over a third of Czech youth cannot live alone due to financial constraints; over a fourth of Czech youth aged 25–29 still share household with at least one of their parents.
- The presence of a stable life partner is a significant factor in removing youth from their parents' orbit in terms of decision-making.
- Slightly over a half of Czech youth are single at the moment but this does not diminish the broad appeal of marriage and having children, which is especially strong among young Czech women.

8

GENERAL VALUES, ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF CZECH YOUTH

PERSONAL LIFE GOALS AND AMBITIONS OF CZECH YOUTH

When presented with a wide-ranging list of personal life goals (listed in the graph below), Czech youth clearly award the greatest importance to areas pertaining to the establishment of one's own individuality and independence, maintaining a healthy lifestyle or pursuing family values.⁸ Nearly four-fifths (79 per cent) of Czech youth consider being independent "mostly" or "very important" in their lives and further three-quarters (76 per cent) value taking up responsibility. These individualistic aspirations of Czech youth are very much in line with their peers from the V4 group. Further, more than a half of Czech youth finds healthy lifestyle items, such as doing sports and healthy eating, important for their lives. In line with previous assessment of gender differences in views on family and family planning among Czech youth, young Czech women assign greater importance to getting married than young Czech men (59 per cent among women, 50 per cent among men). Similarly, some 47 per cent of young Czech women consider having children to be very important goal in their lives while only 35 per cent of men agree. Similar life goals were mentioned repeatedly during the qualitative interviews:

"My dream is a house with a garden not far from Prague. The classic – to build a house, plant a tree, have a child, and adopt a dog."

(IDI, Female, 19–24 y. o., CZ)

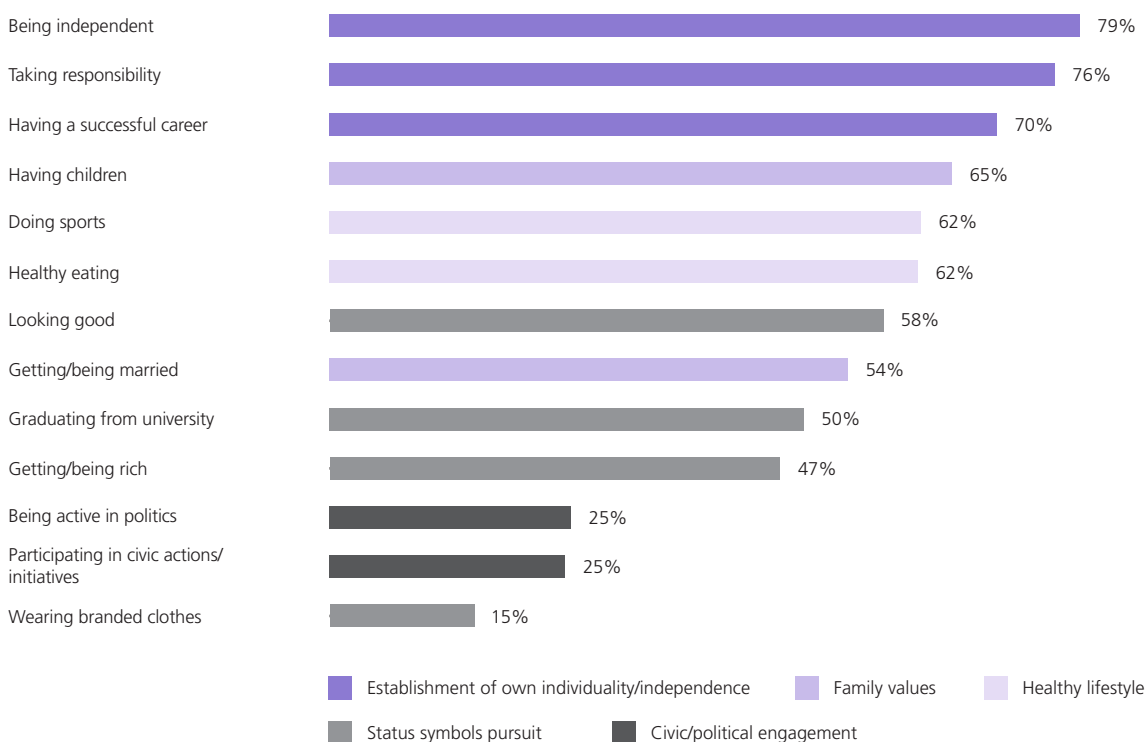
"I want to have a family and peace and quiet and financial security. A family house, healthy family, to sit on a terrace with coffee after work, watch the forest and be mentally alright."

(IDI, Male, 25–29 y. o., CZ)

Finally, it is clear that among Czech youth the interest in civic or political engagement are fairly low – only 25 per cent of Czech youth find being active in politics or participating in civic initiatives "mostly" or "very important", with only one item (wearing branded clothes) being awarded lower importance than these two. This low interest in public affairs is explored further in Chapter 9.

Civic actions or initiatives and participation in politics are largely seen as unimportant by Czech youth; establishing one's independence and securing a successful career are seen as far more important life goals.

FIGURE 7: SHARES OF CZECH YOUTH THAT FIND THE FOLLOWING "MOSTLY IMPORTANT" OR "VERY IMPORTANT" (%)



Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021.

Any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown.

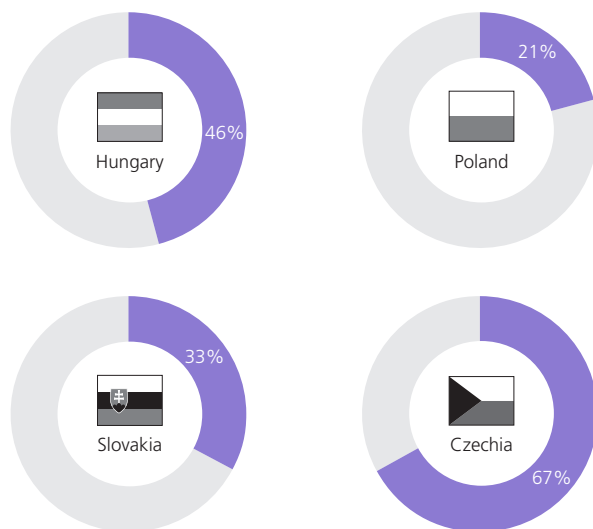
RELIGIOSITY OF CZECH YOUTH

Czech society is one of the least religious compared to other European countries. For example, according to a combined religiosity index put together by the Pew Research Center, only 8 per cent of adults in the Czech Republic were considered “highly religious”. This was the second lowest rate across 32 European countries surveyed with only Estonia having similarly low rate of 7 per cent (Pew Research, 2018). Czech citizens’ attitudes towards religion and church make them distinct outliers within the V4 group as well – in Poland, 40 per cent of adults are highly religious according to Pew, in Slovakia, the share is 27 per cent and in Hungary 17 per cent.

This exceptional position of Czech population on religious issues is quite faithfully reproduced among the country’s youth population. While some 43 per cent of youth population of the V4 countries profess not belonging to any religious community, among Czech youth this share rises to 73 per cent (and 77 per cent in Estonia, which supports to comparative findings of the Pew Research Center). Further, when asked how often they attended religious services apart from funerals and weddings in the year before the pandemic, two-thirds (67 per cent) of Czech youth responded that they never did so, compared to a V4 average of 42 per cent.

The particularly low religiosity of Czech population is quite faithfully reproduced among the country’s youth population.

FIGURE 8: “PLEASE THINK OF THE YEAR BEFORE THE COVID-19 CRISIS. APART FROM WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS, ABOUT HOW OFTEN DID YOU ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES THESE DAYS?”
Share of “Practically never” answers (%)



Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021.

Among Czech youth specifically, those who live in urban areas are more likely to declare not belonging to any religion whatsoever than their peers living in more rural parts of the Czech Republic. Those Czech youth who declared their support for the right-wing SPOLU coalition, which includes the conservative Christian Democrats, were significantly more likely to declare belonging to a Roman Catholic or Protestant Church.

Sociologists and historians studying the exceptional positions of Czech citizens towards religions note that at the time of establishing the independent Czechoslovak state in 1918, Catholicism was a state religion of the despised Austrian-Habsburg monarchy that ruled the Czech lands before. Further, as Dana Hamplova notes:

“Indifference towards church religion was, in the second half of the 20th century, further deepened by the anti-religious propaganda and persecution of the communist regime but we should not interpret the Czech non-religiosity simply as a legacy of the communist past. The Czech population had rather ambiguous attitudes towards the church even before the onset of the communism, which explains why none of the other Central European post-communist country displays a similarly low support for traditional religion as the Czech Republic’s population.” (Hamplova, 2010)

While in many other areas the beliefs and opinions of youth across the V4 countries are very much alike, Czech youth is an outlier from the rest of the region’s youth population when it comes to religious matters. Czech youth continue to be influenced by the country’s strong anti-Catholic tradition and shy away from organised religion in majority.

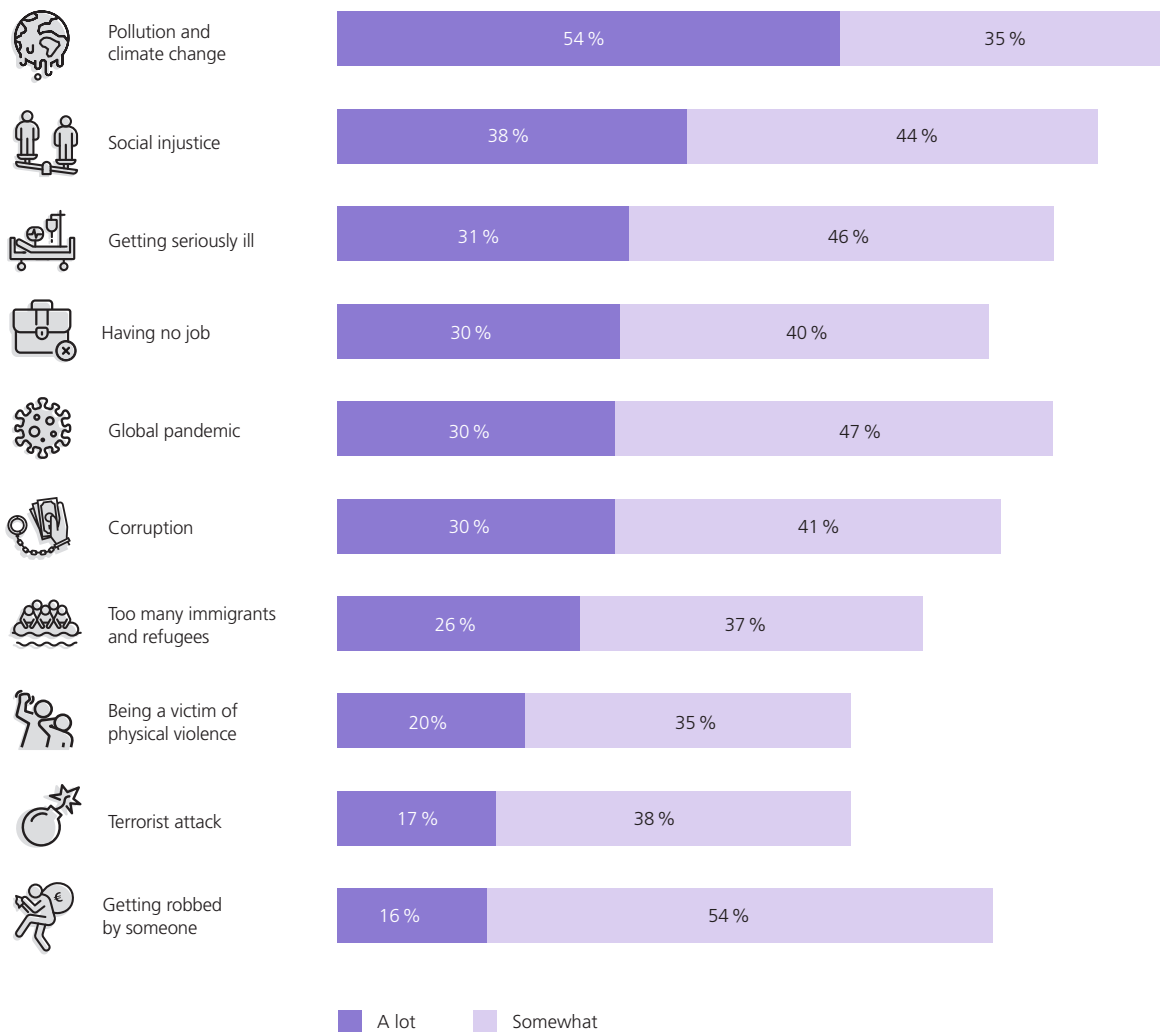
While in many other areas the beliefs and opinions of youth across the V4 countries are very much alike, Czech youth is an outlier from the rest of the region’s youth population when it comes to religious matters.

FEARS AND CONCERNS OF CZECH YOUTH

Czech youth is acutely aware of the ongoing climate change and deeply worried about it – a full 89 per cent of young Czechs said that they are “somewhat” or “a lot worried” about “pollution and climate change.” Climate change and its effects thus topped this list of tested fears and concerns, not only for Czech youth but across the V4 region where 87 per cent of youth worry about it at least somewhat. This finding about Czech youth is generally in line with an extensive study “Czech climate 2021” that mapped the attitudes and beliefs of young Czechs aged 15–35 (Krajhanzl et al., 2021). Using slightly different wording of the question and surveying broader age group, this study found that approximately three-quarters of this target population worry somewhat or very much about climate change. The People in Need survey of Czech high school students also notes that this heightened awareness of climate change among Czech youth is a relatively recent development, observing that there has been a sharp increase of young Czechs who consider it a top priority between 2017 and 2020 (Jeden svět na školách, 2020). The same study suggested that students of university-preparatory high schools and from well-off families were significantly more likely to list climate change as the top threat to the world. These differences were not observed in present data where age, education or household’s economic situation played no significant role in the share of Czech youth who viewed climate change as a threat. There are, however, differences between young Czech men and women in their perception of climate change – 61 per cent of women worry about climate change a lot, while among men the corresponding share is 47 per cent.

Pollution and climate change, social injustice and worries related to global pandemic situation scored highest among the tested threats for Czech youth.

FIGURE 9: SHARES OF CZECH YOUTH WORRYING "SOMEWHAT" OR "A LOT" ABOUT THE FOLLOWING FEARS AND CONCERNS (%)



Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021.

Any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown.

While the summary of personal life goals of Czech youth could indicate higher rates of individualism among young Czechs, the fact that the second greatest worry of Czech youth is social injustice suggests a more complicated picture. Global pandemic and getting seriously ill are, fully understandably in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a worry for more than three-quarters of Czech youth. The previously wide media coverage of the controversy surrounding the so-called migration crisis of 2015–2017 sees a decline of importance on the ladder of threats as worries about immigrants, refugees and possible terrorist attacks rank lower among Czech youth relative to other risks tested. Finally, young Czech women are

significantly more likely to express worries about being victims of physical violence (only 32 per cent of women said they do not worry at all about that compared to 49 per cent of men) and getting seriously ill (35 per cent of women worry a lot about this compared to 28 per cent of men). This suggests that when it comes to assessing risks of physical violence, one's gender can be particularly salient among Czech youth.

Young Czech women are significantly more likely than men to express worries about being victims of physical violence.

DIVERGING ASSESSMENTS OF PERSONAL AND SOCIETAL FUTURES

Among Czech youth (and their V4 peers as well), there is an apparent discord between assessments of one's own personal future in 10 years and the overall future of Czech society in 10 years. On the first, personal future, Czech youth is prevailingly optimistic, with some 77 per cent expecting their lot to improve in 10 years (V4 average is 74 per cent). However, when asked about the general future of Czech Republic's society, Czech youth are rather pessimistic and only 25 per cent of them see the future as better than now, which is in line with the bleak outlook of their V4 peers. A further 40 per cent of Czech youth see the future of Czech society as worse than now. Among those young Czechs who are dissatisfied with their lives in general, the share of those who view the future of their society pessimistically is higher – 47 per cent. Czech youth who are personally interested in politics indicate higher levels of optimism about the future trajectory of the Czech society. A similar pattern applies to those of Czech youth who do not think young people's interests are represented in national politics – a full 54 per cent of them view the future of the Czech society with pessimism. For many, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic further contributes to their scepticism about the future:

“In 10 years, hopefully economics will start recovering from the shock, meanwhile quite a lot of people will be worse off, inflation will grow and so will prices of everything, probably higher taxes. In my opinion, we will return back in 10 years.”

(IDI, Male, 24–29 y. o., CZ)

Considering the relationship between the assessment of one's personal future and the societal one a clear pattern emerges in both the Czech Republic and the V4 group. Approximately one-third of all young people in these countries expects their personal futures to improve while those of their respective society worsen in 10 years. Additionally, those young people who think they will be worse off personally in 10 years are even less likely to believe that their society will be better off overall in the same timeframe. These findings suggest a profound disconnect between assessments of personal and societal futures among Czech and V4 youth. For Czech youth, their personal, individual success in future is possible in spite of perceived worsening of societal situation and lacking representation of youth's interest in national politics.

Czech youth see little connection between their personal, individual success and how their society fares overall. For Czech youth, their personal success in the future is possible in spite of perceived worsening of societal situation.

TABLE 2: FUTURE OF SOCIETY BY PERSONAL FUTURE IN 10 YEARS (%)

		How do you see the future of [your country's] society in general?		
Row % displayed		Worse than now	Same as now	Better than now
How do you see your personal future in 10 years?	V4 countries			
	Worse than now	71	22	7
	Same as now	45	37	18
	Better than now	38	30	31
	Total	41	31	28
	Czechia			
	Worse than now	66	23	11
	Same as now	50	31	19
	Better than now	41	29	30
	Total	44	29	27

Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021.

SOCIAL TOLERANCE OF CZECH YOUTH AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MINORITIES

The survey also included instruments to measure social distances of Czech youth from a variety of minorities (through their hypothetical acceptability as neighbours) and measures of social acceptance of a variety of behaviours diverging from prevailing accepted norms. In terms of potential neighbour groups that were tested in the survey, Czech youth have the fewest issues with Jewish neighbours with only 7 per cent of them expressing that this would be a “bad” or “very bad” situation (compared to V4 average of 11 per cent). Conversely, Czech youth are extremely intolerant towards drug addicts as neigh-

bours with full 87 per cent opposing such a hypothetical scenario compared to a V4 average of 79 per cent.

About 47 per cent of Czech youth express uneasiness with the possibility of having a Roma family for neighbours. However, this result might depict only some aspects of the long uneasy Czech-majority, Roma-minority relationship. As observed in 2021 HateFree research of young Czechs aged 15–30 (Veverkova et al., 2021), among this target group, 86 per cent consider the majority-minority relations with Romas to be rather or very troublesome.

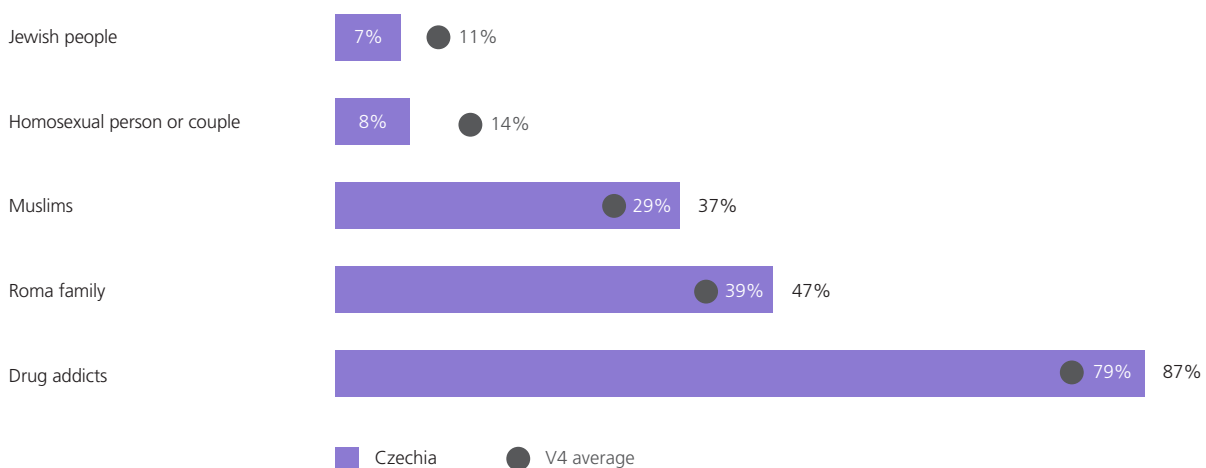
The opposition towards Roma neighbours was significantly lower among the youngest segment of Czech youth aged 15–18 years in research at hand. Similar conclusions were reached in a 2020 research of the Czech Council of Children and Youth, which studied Czech

youth aged 15–29 (Andresova et al., 2021). The authors found that the youngest segment of Czech youth, aged 15–19 years, is significantly more tolerant towards Romas, Muslims and migrants in general (using similarly worded instrument asking about acceptability of these groups as hypothetical neighbours). As this report covered both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the authors noted that these higher rates of tolerance among younger citizens were not observed in Slovakia.

Czech youth are extremely intolerant towards drug addicts as neighbours with near 90 per cent opposing such scenario. Another half would feel bad having a Roma family as neighbours.

Finally, over one-third of Czech youth (37 per cent) is strongly opposed to having Muslims as neighbours. This might seem like a remarkable level of opposition in a country where citizens of Muslim faith represent some 0.1 per cent of the population (Gregor, 2015). In the light of the so-called migration crisis targeting predominantly Muslim refugees and migrants headed to Europe, this outcome might be considered mild. Together with the lower threat perception of refugees and migrants, this suggests that the politically contentious issues of migration and Islam in Europe are far less salient to the present generation of Czech youth and to their V4 peers as well as their attitudes towards hypothetical Muslim neighbours are fairly similar.

FIGURE 10: SHARES OF CZECH AND V4 YOUTH SAYING THEY WOULD FEEL "VERY BAD" OR "BAD" ABOUT THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE AS NEIGHBOURS (%)



Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021.
Any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown.

Czech youth are also distinctly more tolerant (with limitations) towards homosexuality than their V4 peers. Only 8 per cent of young Czechs raise strong objections to having a homosexual person or couple as neighbours, which is a distinctly lower share than the V4 average of 14 per cent. Further when asked to assess justifiability of homosexuality behaviour on a scale from never (1) to always (10), Czech youth gave the average mark of 7.63 compared

to the V4 average of 6.55 and, for example, Hungarian mark of 5.71. This suggests that Czech youth is overall the most tolerant and accepting of homosexuality compared to their V4 peers.

Czech youth are distinctly more tolerant towards homosexuality than their V4 peers. Young Czech women significantly more than men.

FIGURE 11: **YOUTH'S SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN V4 COUNTRIES AND BY GENDER FOR CZECHIA.** Mean score, 1 – never acceptable, 10 – always acceptable



Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021. Any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown.

However, as noted both in the quantitative data and in qualitative interviews, this tolerance of Czech youth has its limits. For one, young Czech women are distinctly more accepting of homosexuals. For example, about 12 per cent of young Czech men consider homosexuality to be “never acceptable” while corresponding share among women is only 3 per cent. Vice versa, 62 per cent of young Czech women consider homosexuality to be “always acceptable” while only one-third (33 per cent) of Czech men do. This finding corresponds to Kudrnac’s study in which he found that among Czech youth aged 15–20 years, females were significantly less prejudiced towards sexual minorities than males (Kudrnac, 2016). Further, the qualitative interviews suggested that homosexuality is tolerated, rather than warmly accepted, by many Czech youth who express having no issues with homosexuals as long as they confine their relations to the privacy of their homes and do not express themselves openly in public:

“Let everyone do as they please, I have nothing against them, but I don’t want them to push it on me, to have to look at it.”

(IDI, Male, 19–25 y. o.)

Other interviewees took issue with the erosion of traditional male-female presentation of gender identity:

“Homosexuality is a normal phenomenon, on the other hand 350 other genders and the issues with toilets that’s debauchery and it’s gone too far.”

(IDI, Male, 25–29 y. o.)

In terms of other tested behaviours and orientations and their justifiability, besides abortion, the trends are relatively homogenous for all V4 youth populations. Thus, cheating on taxes and accepting or giving bribes is widely frowned upon, while taking advantage of personal connections to find employment or “get things done” in a hospital or a state office is rather normalised and acceptable for all V4 youth.

TABLE 3: **SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY OF SELECTED BEHAVIOURS AND ORIENTATIONS IN V4 COUNTRIES,**
mean score, 1 – never acceptable, 10 – always acceptable

		Selected behaviours and orientations					
Average score displayed		Homo-sexuality	Using connections to find employment	Abortion	Using connections to ,get things done‘	Accepting/ giving a bribe	Cheating on taxes if you have a chance
V4 countries	Hungary	5,7	6,3	5,3	5,6	3,6	2,6
	Czechia	7,6	6,7	6,6	5,7	3,1	3,1
	Slovakia	5,9	6,0	5,8	5,4	3,6	3,3
	Poland	6,9	6,5	6,4	5,7	2,8	3,3
	V4 Average	6,5	6,4	6,0	5,6	3,3	3,1

Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021

MAIN FINDINGS

- Civic actions or initiatives and participation in politics are largely seen as unimportant by Czech youth; establishing one's independence and securing a successful career are seen as far more important life goals.
- Particularly low religiosity of the Czech population is quite faithfully reproduced among the country's youth population.
- While in many other areas the beliefs and opinions of youth across the V4 countries are very much alike, Czech youth are an outlier from the rest of the region's youth population when it comes to religious matters as Czech youth attend church at much lower rates.
- Pollution and climate change, social injustice and worries related to global pandemic situation represent the top 3 perceived threats for Czech youth.
- Young Czech women are significantly more likely than men to express worries about being victims of physical violence.
- For Czech youth, their personal success in the future is possible in spite of perceived worsening of societal situation and lack of representation in national politics.
- Czech youth are extremely intolerant towards drug addicts as neighbours with nearly 90 per cent opposing such a scenario. Another half would oppose having Roma family as neighbours.
- Czech youth are distinctly more tolerant towards homosexuality than their V4 peers. Young Czech women significantly more so than men.

9

POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND PARTICIPATION OF CZECH YOUTH

It is important to bear in mind that many of the findings of this chapter relate to the previous government and political climate it produced. Highly contested parliamentary elections which received extensive media coverage in October 2021 have redrawn the legislative and executive map of power in the Czech Republic. The incoming government capitalised on bottom-up movements where young people played prominent leadership roles and gained much of their support. Therefore there is a renewed space for building connection with these groups and bringing the voices and worries of their youth members into the public debate more. On the other hand, possible unfulfilled promises or unmet expectations might lead to even deeper alienation and discontent among Czech youth.

OPINIONS ON REPRESENTATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN POLITICS, GENERAL INTEREST IN POLITICS, POLITICAL INITIATIVES, AND VOTING INTENTIONS OF CZECH YOUTH

Czech youth do not believe that their interests are well represented in the national politics of the Czech Republic with only 9 per cent of them confident that the interests of young people are represented “well” or “very well” in the national politics. This share is on par with the V4 average of 11 per cent. As is clear from other questions gauging the overall interest of Czech youth in politics, the scepticism about representation of the interests of Czech youth translates into a broad retreat from public affairs and disinterest in politics overall. Czech youth tend to perceive national politics as something removed from them and their lives as seen in the qualitative interviews:

“In general, a common citizen with no connections will make no difference. And I am not interested because I get the impression that politics does not affect me directly. So far, I am a carefree student, so I am not concerned about taxes just yet.”

(IDI, 19–24 y. o., CZ)

The less Czech youth believe their interests matter in the national politics, the less likely they are to be interested in

politics, discuss it with friends and vote in elections. These themes also came up during the qualitative interviews:

“We talk politics only very scarcely with my friends. And if so, then only briefly and it’s pretty vulgar.”

(FG, 15–19 y. o., CZ)

“Our generation doesn’t talk about politics much; we have somehow given up because all the news is so horribly negative.”

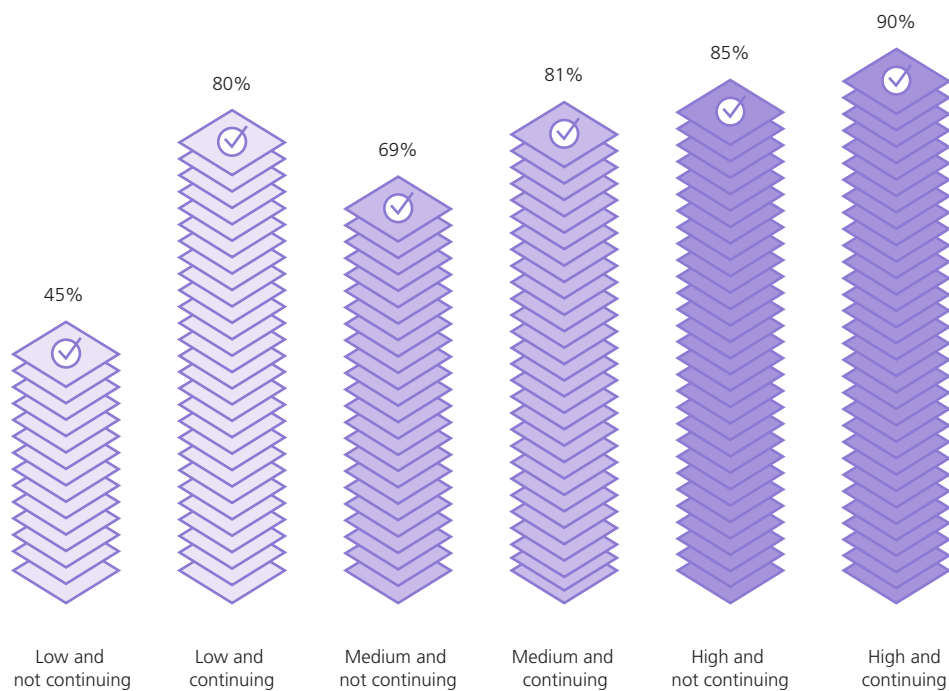
(FG, 25–29 y. o., CZ)

Czech youth have very little interest in politics, do not want to take political functions and largely avoid discussing it. Additionally, very few young people believe that the interests of youth are well represented in Czech national politics.

In the light of this scepticism of Czech youth towards political affairs and their role in it, the declared intent to vote in national elections is rather high with nearly four-fifths (79 per cent) of Czech youth indicating that if they were eligible to vote in national parliament elections, they would do so. However, the PAQ research analysis carried out in the aftermath of the October 2021 parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic showed that the actual turnout among young Czech voters aged 18–34 years was only 63 per cent, which suggests a significant gap between the declared intent to vote and the actual act of doing so among Czech youth (Prokop, 2021). Further, PAQ researchers noted that the 2021 turnout among Czech youth was significantly higher than in 2017 when only 52 per cent of young Czechs voted in the parliamentary elections. The researchers also noted significant differences in the 2021 election turnout among young Czechs based on their educational attainment. While only 48 per cent of Czech youth without the *maturita* exam (awarded at the conclusion of secondary university-preparatory high school) voted, over 70 per cent of young Czechs with at least *maturita* education took part in the elections. These findings suggest that there is a strong linkage between educational attainment and political engagement among Czech youth.

There is a clear linkage between educational attainment and political engagement among Czech youth. Willingness to vote rises with the level of education.

FIGURE 12: **DECLARED INTENT TO VOTE IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS BY EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF YOUNG CZECHS (%)**



Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021.

Finally, when asked if they would be willing to assume political function, nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of Czech youth answered, “not at all” or “probably not” and only 9 per cent of young Czechs would do so gladly. This aversion towards entering politics is not consistent across gender lines. For example, while 38 per cent women resolutely refuse assuming a political function, only 26 per cent of men do so, which might be in no small part the effect of significant prevalence of men in top levels of Czech politics. In the latest parliamentary elections, women represented only 32 per cent of all nominees and compose 25 per cent of the legislators elected to the parliament (Fórum 50%). These gender disparities are present among Czech youth even on aspirational level – 7 per cent and 32 per cent of Czech men have worked for a political party or have not yet but would like to, respectively. Among young Czech women, only 3 per cent have worked for a political party and only 20 per cent would like to do so in the future.

FAMILY INFLUENCES ON POLITICAL OPINIONS OF CZECH YOUTH

As discussed above, the educational trajectories of Czech youth are strongly affected by the educational attainment levels of their parents. Bearing the significance of parental education in mind, we sought to investigate if there were similar trends with regards to cross-generational replication of political beliefs and convictions. To this end, the survey included a question asking the respondents to what extent their political views aligned with those of their parents.⁹ Overall, the distribution among Czech youth is relatively even: on one hand, 31 per cent say they do not agree with their parents on politics “at all” or “just a little”, while another 31 per cent of young Czechs profess agreeing with their parents “quite” or “very much”. This division is in line with other youth populations in the V4 region.

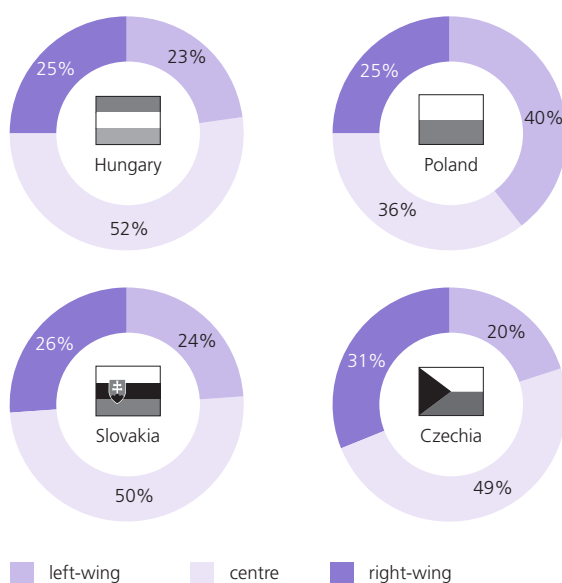
However, when family alignments on political worldview are assessed through other “political” activities some differences emerge. For example, the more often Czech youth discuss politics with family and friends, the more likely they are to be in political agreement with their parents. Among those young Czechs who engaged often in political discussions, some 37 per cent agreed with their parents “quite” a lot on politics; among those youth who rarely discussed politics with others the comparable agreement with parents on politics was only 18 per cent. Right-wing/left-wing self-identification of Czech youth also affects the levels of political strife within families. While it is true, as explained below, that Czech youth are overall more right-wing oriented than their V4 peers, the positive relationship between age and shift to right-wing politics, discussed vigorously in literature, plays out in the Czech Republic as well (Peterson et al., 2020). This means that the more right-wing Czech youth are, the more likely they are to agree with their parents, whose generation is overall more on the right wing of the political spectrum. For example, while 26 per cent of right-wing oriented Czech youth has no or little alignment with their parents’ political views, the corresponding share among left-wing youth is 37 per cent. Conversely, some 35 per cent of left-leaning youth agrees with their parent quite or very much, while among their right-leaning counterparts, it is 43 per cent.

LEFT-RIGHT DIVISION AND POSITIONS OF SPECIFIC POLICY ISSUES

Compared to their V4 peers, Czech youth’s self-identification on the left-right political scale is tilted towards the right-wing end. For example, only one-fifth of Czech youth self-identifies as following left-wing politics (reduced from a 10-point scale) but the V4 average share is 27 per cent, driven mostly by the 40 per cent share of left-leaning youth in Poland. Conversely, 31 per cent of Czech youth profess identifying with right-wing politics, which is slightly higher than the V4 average of 27 per cent.

Compared to their V4 peers, Czech youth’s self-identification on the left-right political scale is tilted towards the right-wing end.

FIGURE 13: LEFT/RIGHT-WING SELF-IDENTIFICATION IN V4 (%)



Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021. Any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown.

However, it should be noted that the determinants of left-right wing self-identification are not consistent even within the geographically and culturally proximate V4 group. For example, Cisar and Navratil make a distinction between the Czech Republic and Slovakia on one hand, and Poland and Hungary, on the other hand, noting that “in the first two countries socioeconomic issues formed the main cleavage in the political party field, in the latter two other issues assumed the main structuring role in the political conflict” (Cisar & Navratil, 2015). For example, in Poland, the institution of Catholic Church is perceived by young Poles as closely tied to the governing right-wing PiS party; in the Czech Republic, such an association of right-wing parties is present only with the Christian Democrats party specifically, not with right-wing politics as a whole (Tilles, 2021).

For Czech youth, the self-identification on the left/right-wing scale also plays a large and predictable role in their positions on selected tested policy issues. Left-oriented Czech youth are more likely to support making the incomes of the poor and rich more equal and that the Czech government ought to ensure that everyone is provided for. Similarly, universal basic income is more strongly supported by the left-leaning segment of Czech youth and partially by those positioned in centre as well.

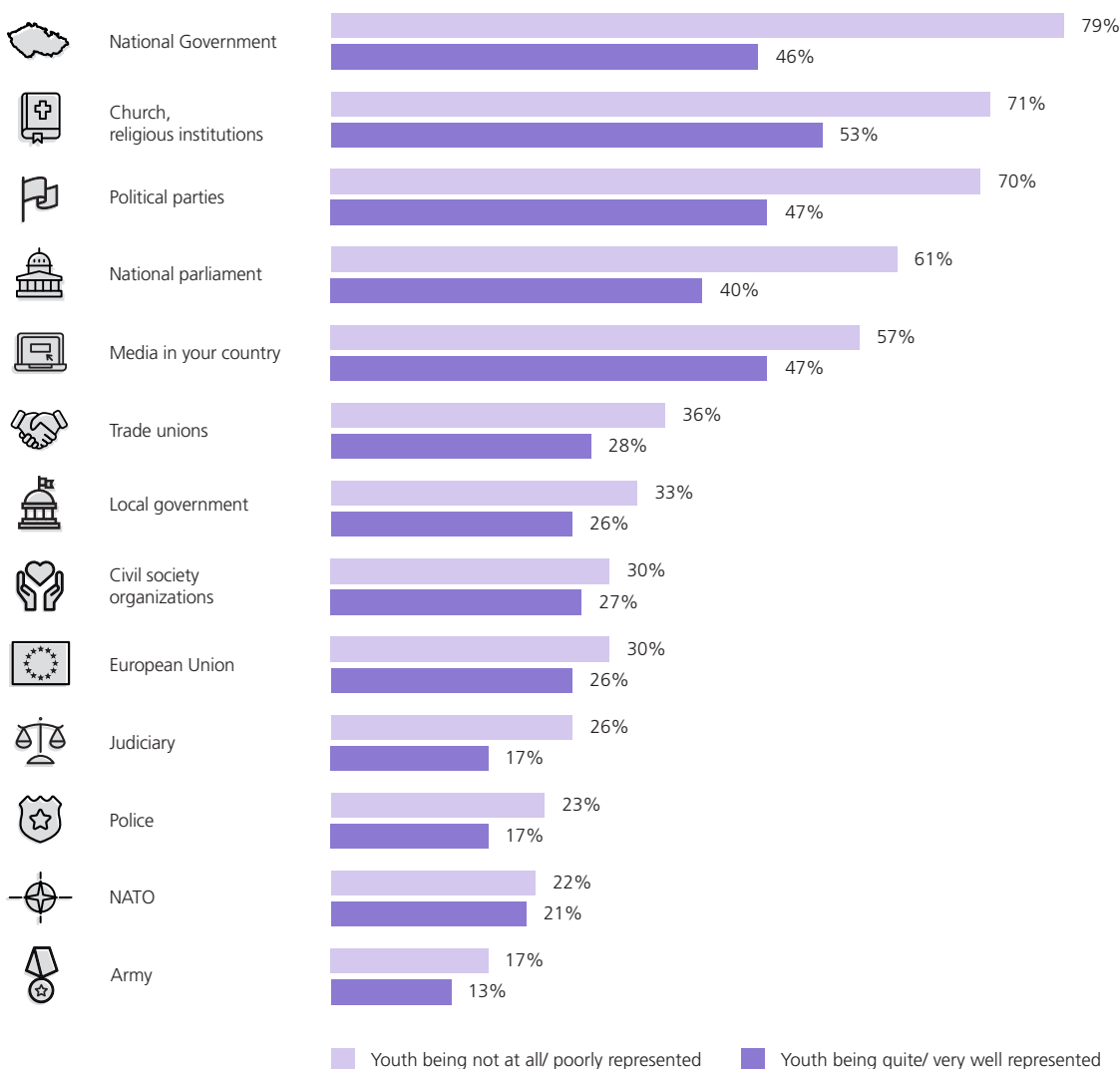
TRUST IN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

The salience of Czech youths' opinions on how well their interests are represented in national politics is supported by cross-cutting analysis of trust levels in variety of national and international institutions. Among the main public institutions in the Czech Republic, the differences are noteworthy. For example, nearly four-fifths (79 per cent) of Czech youth who think their interests are poorly or not at all represented in national politics distrust the Czech government.¹⁰ However, among those young Czechs who believe that their interests are at least quite well represented in the national politics only 46 per cent distrust

the Czech government. Similar disparities are observed in trust levels towards other national institutions, including political parties, Parliament, media and church organisations, which are in substance an outlier from the rest of the group.

On the other hand, judiciary, police and the army belong to institutions that are both very trusted overall and where the differences in trust rates between the two above-discussed groups of Czech youth are rather minuscule. Similar absence of differentiation in trust applies to the EU and NATO, which is rooted in the fact that their international presence and operations have less direct connection to the question of young peoples' interests in Czech national politics.

FIGURE 14: (DIS)TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS AMONG CZECH YOUTH. Share of "Not at all" and "A little" trust by perception of how well young people's interests are represented in national politics (%)



Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021.

Any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown.

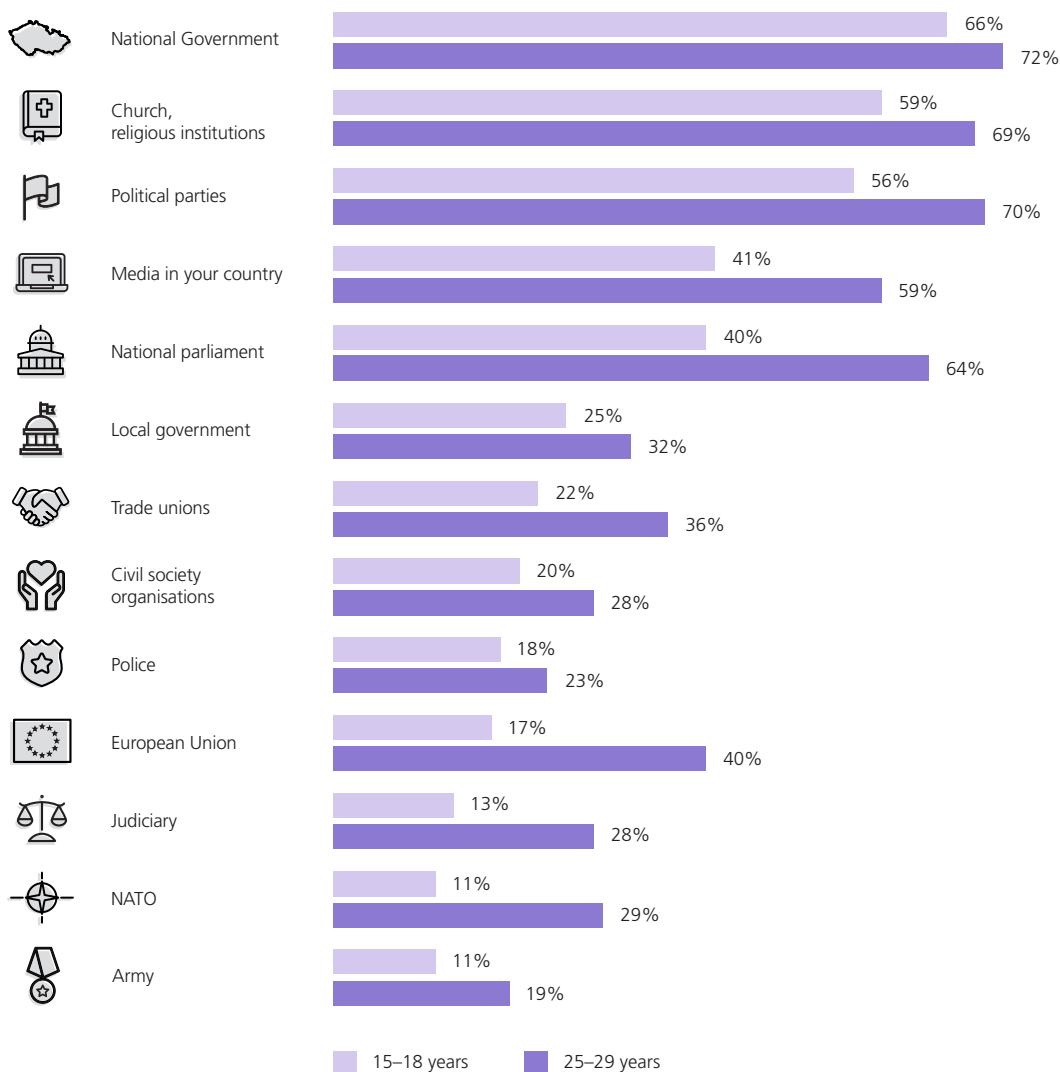
Those Czech youth who believe that their interests are represented in national politics are significantly more trusting towards a broad range of national institutions and bodies.

When trust levels in the same set of institutions are assessed by the age groups of Czech youth a clear pattern emerges – the older Czech youth are, the more distrust they hold towards institutions, both domestic and international. For example, nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of Czech youth aged 25–29 distrust the Czech government but only 40 per cent of those aged 15–18 years do. Similarly, the EU is distrusted by 40 per cent of the older Czech youth but

only by 17 per cent among the youngest segment. This suggests that the distrust towards Czech and international political institutions is not a given outlook of Czech youth but rather something acquired through the process of ageing and accumulation of life and professional experiences (the middle age group of Czech youth scores in between these two groups across almost all categories).

Distrust towards all institutions increases with age within the group of Czech youth; especially so in case of Czech parliament, domestic media and European Union.

FIGURE 15: (DIS)TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS AMONG CZECH YOUTH. Share of “Not at all” and “A little” trust by youngest vs. oldest youth group of Czech youth (%)



Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021.

Any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown.

NATIONALISTIC ATTITUDES OF CZECH YOUTH

In 2020 the US-based NDI commissioned a comparative study of political beliefs of young people (aged 16–29) across the V4 countries (NDI, 2020).¹¹ In a series of questions, the respondents are asked to what extent they identify with their nation, Europe, local community, religion and the political party they would vote for. While some three quarters of young people across all four *Visegrád* countries expressed identification with their respective nation, this alignment with one's nation did not exclude other levels of identification. In fact, some two-thirds of young people in V4 declared an identification with Europe,¹² according to the NDI data.

This is to a high degree consistent with the current survey that found that in V4, about 57 per cent of youth identify very much or completely as Europeans, whereas 63 per cent of V4 youth identified to the same extent with their national identity.

Another illustrative finding from the NDI inquires into identities that goes in line with the above-discussed low rates of religiosity among Czech youth is that only 12 per cent of Czech youth identify with their religion. Finally, identification with one's preferred political party was also very low among Czech youth, especially when compared to their V4 counterparts, which suggests that Czech youth are exceptionally disconnected from the political party system in the country.

Czech youth are exceptionally disconnected from religion and the political party system in the country.

TABLE 4: TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU IDENTIFY YOURSELF OR NOT IDENTIFY WITH THE FOLLOWING ENTITIES? share identifying with each category (%)

Selected entities						
Share identifying with entity displayed (%)		My nation	Europe	My local community	My religion	Political party I would vote for
V4 countries	Hungary	75	73	72	32	37
	Czechia	74	61	55	12	18
	Slovakia	73	73	66	64	48
	Poland	70	60	51	55	47

Source: NDI Youth Attitudes on Politics and Democracy in Central Europe 2020.

However, when respondents were asked in the current survey if they are “proud to be a citizen of the Czech Republic”, only some 51 per cent of Czech youth agreed, which is slightly above the V4 average of 45 per cent. Contrasting this share with the higher rates of self-identification with the Czech nation indicates that national pride and national self-identification do not overlap fully. Further, for Czech youth the levels of national pride were influenced by their general satisfaction with their lives. Among those who were dissatisfied with their lives, some 33 per cent were not proud to be citizens of the Czech Republic. However, among the Czech youth satisfied with their lives, only 14 per cent were not proud of being Czech citizens.

Czech youth can simultaneously hold multiple overlapping identities (for example: Czech, European and local), these are not necessarily seen as mutually exclusive.

The survey included three other instruments evaluating respondents’ nationalistic tendencies and positions – accepting more migrants, that the Czech Republic should be inhabited only by real Czechs and that foreigners living in the country should adopt Czech customs and values. Among Czech youth, the older one is, the more likely he/she was to adopt more nationalistic position on these issues. For example, among the youngest segment of Czech youth aged 15–18 years, 57 per cent oppose accepting more immigrants but among the oldest group of Czech youth aged 25–29, two third (67 per cent) oppose this. Similar pattern is observed across the other statements as well. Much like with analysis of trust in national and international institutions above, this supports the hypothesis that more hard-line nationalistic attitudes are not a given thing for Czech youth but rather something one is more likely to acquire through the process of ageing and maturing.

COMPARING THE STATE OF MATTERS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND EUROPEAN UNION

Young Czechs are firmly in favour of remaining in the EU with only 16 per cent expressing desire to leave the EU. Not only is this share similarly low across the youth populations of the V4 region, but young Czechs are also distinctly more pro-EU than the overall Czech population. The general support for the EU membership has hovered around 50 per cent in the last couple years, according to STEM population survey data.¹³ The youngest segment of Czech youth is again more in favour of the EU membership with only 7 per cent of them agreeing that the Czech Republic should leave the EU. Among young Czechs between 25 and 29 years of age, this share is 23 per cent, again suggesting that as Czech youth age, they become more closed and sceptical towards the EU, more in line with the overall ambivalence of Czech population towards its EU membership. Further, a full 62 per cent of young Czechs who support the anti-system SPD party also oppose EU membership, which reflects SPD’s long-term opposition to the EU.

The EU membership is also more popular among left-leaning young Czechs (80 per cent of them oppose leaving the EU) than among those espousing right-wing politics (72 per cent support remaining in the EU). Appraisal of the EU membership is also associated with educational attainment and current educational status (i.e., are they in school or not) of Czech youth. About two-fifths (41 per cent) of Czech youth with vocational education who are not continuing their studies are in favour of leaving the EU. Among those youth who finish university-preparatory high school with *maturita* exam and are not studying anymore, only 18 per cent support leaving the EU.

Opposition to the EU is exceptionally low among the Czech youth, especially when compared to Czech society’s overall ambivalent stance towards the EU.

Further, opinions about the EU and the Czech Republic’s membership therein are associated with general evaluation of democracy as such among Czech youth. Young Czechs who agree that democracy is a good form of

government in general are significantly more likely to support EU membership than those who harbour prior doubts about the democratic model of governance. Similar cleavages emerge in the extent to which Czech youth agree that “strong leader is important for the Czech Republic, even if he/she will not always act in accordance with the established rules.” Among those young Czechs who definitely agree with this authoritarianism-testing statement, some 29 per cent support leaving the EU; among those who definitely disagree with the statement, only 7 per cent are in favour of departing from the EU.

When looking at ways Czech youth evaluate the situation in the Czech Republic and the EU as a whole across a broad list of areas, it becomes clear that the EU’s appeal is not driven by a perceived better performance in areas such as democracy, rule of law or human rights. Rather, it is in the area of economic welfare of EU citizens where young Czechs both perceive the EU to be doing a better job and the Czech Republic to be especially underperforming. This perception of economic performance of the EU is further strengthened by the fact that some 62 per cent of Czech youth believe that EU membership has had a positive effect on the Czech Republic. Conversely, Czech youth believe that the security situation in the Czech Republic is distinctly better than in the EU as a whole.

Young Czechs perceive the EU to be doing a better job in the area of economic welfare and the Czech Republic to be especially underperforming.

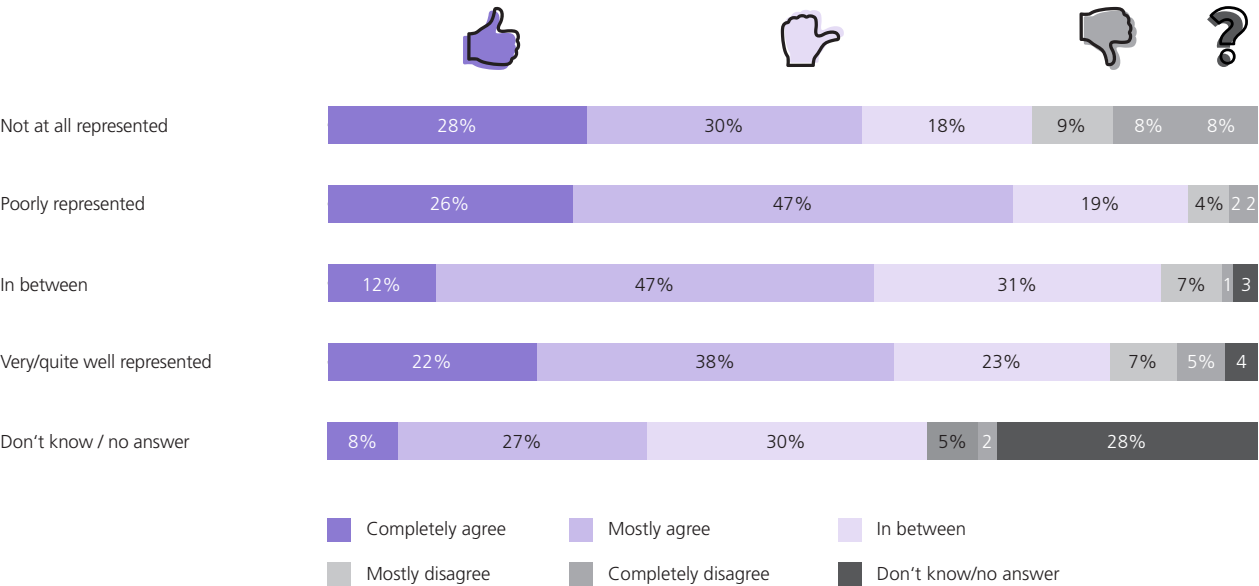
Conversely, Czech youth believe that the security situation in the Czech Republic is distinctly better than in the EU as a whole.

CZECH YOUTH’S GENERAL APPRAISAL OF DEMOCRACY

When asked about their evaluation of democratic form of governance, nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of Czech youth agree that democracy is a good form of government, which is above the V4 average of 58 per cent. Again, age differences appear – 31 per cent of Czechs aged 15–18 years agree with this statement completely, while among those aged 25–29 years, it is only 20 per cent. Evaluation of authoritarian forms of governance is strongly linked to gender among Czech youth: while only half of young Czech men disagree with the statement that under certain conditions dictatorship is a better form of government, two-thirds (68 per cent) of young Czech women oppose this sentiment. Men are also significantly more likely than women to agree that they “know a lot about politics”, which goes in line with the above-discussed differences between young Czech men and women in willingness to assume political functions.

Two-thirds of Czech youth agree that democracy is a good form of government.

FIGURE 16: SUPPORT FOR MORE POSSIBILITIES OF SPEAKING OUT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN POLITICS BY VIEWS ON LEVEL OF REPRESENTATION OF YOUTH IN POLITICS (%)



Source: FES Youth study V4 and Baltics 2021.
Any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown.

CZECH YOUTH'S DESIRE FOR REPRESENTATION

Low interest in politics of Czech youth and their disengagement from public affairs described earlier in this chapter might seem self-evident. However, most young Czechs (62 per cent) express support towards more possibilities of speaking out for young people in politics. This level of support is commonly shared (near) regardless the opinion on current representation of youth voice in politics.

Despite low level of youth relating to the current state of public and political affairs, there is a substantial support towards more possibilities of speaking out for young people in politics.

As passive and politically inert Czech youth might appeal, there is an evident potential for connecting with public matters and politics again should the young representatives and agendas get more room in the public or political debate.

To support the picture of potential for change, there are some broader initiatives of youth forming and gathering support in recent years. *Million chvilék* (English: Million moments) is a civic movement that garnered popular support through criticising left-populist government of 2017–2021 and the current Czech President. Since 2018, this movement, which had a handful of prominent leaders from the ranks of Czech youth, organised series of demonstrations with many young Czechs in attendance culminating in summer 2019 at *Letná* demonstration counting about 300,000 protesters.¹⁴ Their activity is considered to be one of the factors leading to higher youth turnout in the recent parliamentary elections. Other initiatives tend to be more subtle. Emerging in 2018 again, initiative Youth, Speak Up! focuses on encouraging young people to be interested and active in politics. It formulates best practices, guidelines and educational factsheets for potential voters and aspiring young politicians, see Youth, Speak Up! (2021).

Support for existing youth initiatives and broader encouragement of potential new ones might be a convenient first step in engaging young people more in politics and civic matters.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Czech youth have very little interest in politics, do not want to take political functions and largely avoid discussing it; additionally, very few young people believe that the interests of youth are well represented in Czech national politics.
- There is a clear linkage between educational attainment and political engagement among Czech youth. Willingness to vote rises with the level of education.
- Compared to their V4 peers, Czech youth's self-identification on the left-right political scale is tilted towards the right-wing end.
- Czech youth who believe that their interests are represented in national politics are significantly more trusting towards a broad range of national institutions and bodies.
- Distrust towards all institutions increases with age within the group of Czech youth; especially so in case of Czech parliament, domestic media and the European Union.
- Czech youth are exceptionally disconnected from religion and the political party system in the country.
- Czech youth can simultaneously hold multiple overlapping identities (for example: Czech, European and local), these are not necessarily seen as mutually exclusive.
- Opposition to the EU is exceptionally low among the Czech youth, especially when compared to Czech society's overall ambivalent stance towards the EU.
- Young Czechs perceive the EU to be doing a better job in the area of economic welfare and the Czech Republic to be especially underperforming. Conversely, Czech youth believe that the security situation in the Czech Republic is distinctly better than in the EU as a whole.
- Two-thirds of Czech youth agree that democracy is a good form of government.
- Despite low level of youth relating to current state of public and political affairs, there is a substantial support towards more possibilities of speaking out for young people in politics.

10

CONCLUSIONS

Two-thirds of Czech youth, or more, are overall satisfied with their lives in general, their family life, their circle of friends and with their education as well.

However, as this report has repeatedly shown, general wellbeing, variety of opportunities and some opinions of Czech youth seem to be much dependent on social capitals present in their family of origin. Particular influence can be attributed to the educational attainment of one's parents. Furthermore, many aspects of Czech youth's lives are conditioned by financial security of their household. For example, the wealthier the household is, the more the youth are able to cope with online education. Personal satisfaction with their lives and living situation also grows with material security.

Both benefits and some characteristic patterns are translated from previous generations to Czech youth. Low identification and involvement with religion or political life and praxis is typical for the whole Czech society including Czech youth. Being rather tolerant towards minorities, Czech youth show a particular aversion to the idea of neighbouring drug addicts and their relationship to the Roma minority seems to be similarly ambivalent as in the whole society.

Focused on their general contentment and wellbeing, the young Czechs see their own foreseeable future with positive expectations. Trust in one's own future is also represented in a comparatively low desire to leave the Czech Republic. However, these positive personal outlooks contrast starkly with mostly sceptical evaluation of prospects for the Czech society as a whole.

As the young Czechs get more independent, start families of their own and deal more with the worries of everyday life, they tend to adapt views more similar to those of their older peers of preceding generations. In most opinions and evaluations, including trust in national institutions and international organisations, the older the youth are the more sceptical and critical they become. This finding suggests that distrust and cynicism of the oldest members of Czech youth are not a given but rather acquired attitudes.

Czech youth mostly pursue goals typical for the transitional nature of their position in life cycle. Prime emphasis is put on the aspiration of getting independent, taking responsibility and establishing successful career.

Of secondary importance, there are goals connected with a healthy life and family values. The least important objectives are those related to civic or political engagement.

Czech youth are well aware of some major challenges that might negatively affect their standards and future. With lower presence in media and public debate, the fears connected with immigrants step back for more acute matters. The most urgent of the tested set seem to be worries based on climate changes, global pandemics and social injustice. An overwhelming majority of Czech youth does not believe that the interests and opinions of young generation are well represented in the national politics of the Czech Republic. This sentiment contributes greatly to a broad disengagement and retreat from public affairs among Czech youth and even, for example, very low shares of Czech youth who spontaneously discuss politics with others frequently. However, the declared intention to vote in the country's parliamentary elections was fairly high, at 79 per cent, among Czech youth, which suggests that scepticism about representation of young people's in politics does not erode youth's willingness to partake in national elections. Further, there is a clear link between educational attainment of Czech youth and its willingness to vote – the higher the attainment, the higher the declared intent to vote.

However, Czech youth remain exceptionally disconnected from the national party system. Out of the V4 countries, Czech youth express the lowest rate of identification with the political party they would vote for in elections. There are only limited signs of political radicalisation of Czech youth. With strong majority, they accept most democratic principles and structures. They also support Czech EU membership and appreciate benefits related to it at higher rates than the overall Czech population. Again, more educated members of Czech youth are more likely to express satisfaction with their country's membership in the EU.

The low interest of youth in current civic and political matters stands in stark contrast to explicit desire for giving young people more possibilities to speak out in national politics. With emerging civic and political initiatives where youth members played prominent roles over the course of the past few years and with greater youth turnout in the recent parliamentary election, there are signs of the rising voice of young Czech generation in domestic politics.

11

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Authors' note on representativeness: Due to limitations given by methodological bias of online survey and logistical and other difficulties related to the global pandemics it is to be expected that both qualitative and quantitative fieldwork underrepresents – to unknown extent – poorer and socially more fragile segments of young population.
- 2 STEM, own research and data series, not published.
- 3 McLoyd (1989), Conger et al. (2002)
- 4 That is, of course, true at the moment as they are not continuing their studies now but could, in theory, choose to do so in the future, which is unobservable from the present point-in-time survey data.
- 5 In Prouzová (2015): Data a fakta o neziskovém sektoru v ČR.
- 6 Mean age at first marriage reached 32.6 years for men and 30.4 for women in 2020, according to CZSO (2020a).
- 7 Mean age of mothers at first childbirth reached 28.5 years in 2020 compared to 23.3 years in 1995, according to CZSO (2020b).
- 8 The set of life goals was explored by applying a Principal Component Analysis to V4 and Czech respondents resulting in identification of convincing sets of youth aspiration. The order of their appearance reflects intensity of potential index based on the items compounding the components:
 - **Establishment of own individuality / independence** covers desire of being independent, taking responsibility and having successful career and articulates prime challenge of youth to finish growing up and become self-reliant.
 - **Family values** ties together aspiration for children (dominant) and for marriage (secondary).
 - **Healthy lifestyle** aggregates doing sports and healthy eating and reflects other individualistic goals supported by media and social presence of these standards and topics.
 - **Status symbols pursuit** connects all aspects that might demonstrate one's wealth or success such as looking good, getting rich or wearing branded clothes.
 - **Graduating from university** stands alone as it plays partial role both as civic engagement element and element of establishment of own independence.
 - **Civic/political engagement** brings together least popular aspirations of being active in politics and participating in civic initiatives.
- 9 Note that the survey did not handle possible situations of families where parents wield different political views. That might have produced some level of confusion for (assumingly) a minority of respondents.
- 10 Note that this sentiment was mostly intended towards left-populist government that lost the main Parliamentary elections in October 2021. The figures should not be related to the new right-centrist Government that came to power in December 2021.
- 11 STEM Institute was responsible for the Czech Republic data analysis.
- 12 It should be noted, however, that the NDI survey asked about identification with "Europe", which is a broader and more vague and accepted concept than the "EU" as such. It is reasonable to assume that levels of self-identification with the EU might be somewhat lower among *Visegrád* youth. Other STEM polls have shown that adult Czech citizens are more likely to identify with a "European" identity (75 per cent of general public in 2019) rather than with "European Union" as such (56 per cent of general public in 2019); STEM (2019).
- 13 Contentment with Czech EU membership among Czech public 2005–2021 in STEM (2021)
- 14 Present in media, for example BBC: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50446661>

12

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LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

PAGE 20	Table 1: Educational status of V4 and Czech youth by combined attainment of parents
PAGE 38	Table 2: Future of society by personal future in 10 years
PAGE 41	Table 3: Social acceptability of selected behaviours and orientations in V4 countries. Mean score, 1 – never acceptable, 10 – always acceptable
PAGE 48	Table 4: To what extent do you identify yourself or not identify with the following entities? Share identifying with each category

LIST OF FIGURES

PAGE 14	Figure 1: Household economic condition of Czech youth by household type
PAGE 17	Figure 2: How satisfied are you generally with the quality of education in [your country]? By V4 countries, share of “Mostly satisfied” and “Very satisfied” answers
PAGE 18	Figure 3: Number of weeks of school closures due to pandemics and classroom/distance learning preference in V4 countries
PAGE 23	Figure 4: Shares of V4 youth with no job by their activity towards getting a job and unemployment rates in V4 countries
PAGE 24	Figure 5: How many hours per week do you work on average? By V4 countries and by Czech social grade groups
PAGE 30	Figure 6: Czech youth’s satisfaction with family life by household type
PAGE 33	Figure 7: Shares of Czech youth that find the following “mostly important” or “very important”
PAGE 34	Figure 8: “Please think of the year before the Covid-19 crisis. Apart from weddings and funerals, about how often did you attend religious services these days?” Share of “Practically never” answers
PAGE 36	Figure 9: Shares of Czech youth worrying “somewhat” or “a lot” about the following fears and concerns
PAGE 39	Figure 10: Shares of Czech and V4 youth saying they would feel “very bad” or “bad” about the following people as neighbours

- PAGE 40** Figure 11: **Youth's social acceptability of homosexuality in V4 countries and by gender for Czechia.** Mean score, 1 – never acceptable, 10 – always acceptable
- PAGE 44** Figure 12: **Declared intent to vote in the next parliamentary elections by educational status of young Czechs**
- PAGE 45** Figure 13: **Left/right-wing self-identification in V4**
- PAGE 46** Figure 14: **(Dis)trust in institutions among Czech youth.** Share of “Not at all” and “A little” trust by perception of how well young people's interest are represented in national politics
- PAGE 47** Figure 15: **(Dis)trust in institutions among Czech youth.** Share of “Not at all” and “A little” trust by youngest vs. oldest youth group of Czech youth
- PAGE 50** Figure 16: **Support for more possibilities of speaking out for young people in politics by views on level of representation of youth in politics**

14

ABOUT FES YOUTH STUDIES

This publication is a part of the FES International Youth Studies. Starting in 2009 FES has conducted numerous Youth Studies around the globe. Since 2018 Youth Studies focus specifically on Southern Eastern Europe, Russia, Central Asia, Eastern Central Europe and the Baltic States. Further studies are being planned for the Middle East and Northern Africa as well as in individual countries around the globe. The International Youth Studies are a flagship project of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in its endeavour to research, shape and strengthen the Democracy of the Future. It strives to contribute to the European discourse on how young generations see the development of their societies as well as their personal future in a time of national and global transformation. The representative studies combine qualitative and quantitative elements of research in close partnership with the regional teams aiming a high standard in research and a sensitive handling of juvenile attitudes and expectations.

A dedicated Advisory Board (Dr. Miran Lavrič, Univ.-Prof. Dr. Marius Harring, Daniela Lamby, András Biró-Nagy and Dr. Mārtiņš Kaprāns) supports the methodological and conceptual design of the Youth Studies. The Board consists of permanent and associated members and provides essential expertise for the overall project.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

The data that form the basis of this publication were collected in the course of online individual in-depth interviews (n=10 à 60 minutes in average) with young people aged 14–29 years. Various questioning techniques and methods were used in the interviews to specifically address the psychological consequences of Covid-19 for young people. The online interviews were conducted by experienced moderators from the polling agency and research institute Ipsos and local partners. Ipsos Germany, Janine Freudenberg and Laura Wolfs, coordinated the study both in terms of content and organisation.

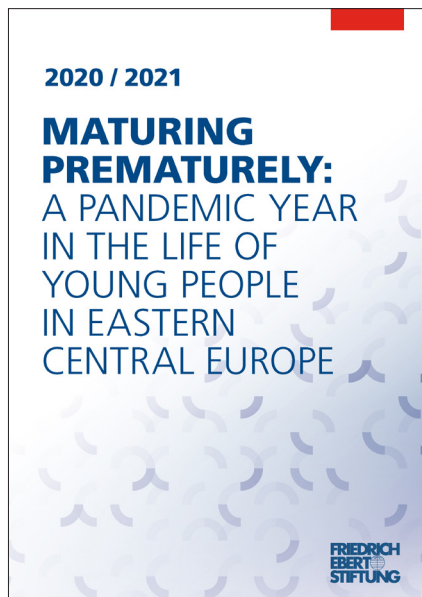
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OTHER YOUTH STUDIES PUBLICATIONS



The coronavirus pandemic has been a great shock to societies in Central Europe. The restrictions it has brought about are extensive, and must have been particularly new for the young generation that cannot remember the eras before the democratic regimes were established in this region. In this report youths' experiences of the first year of the pandemic were studied in four countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted in each country, in which young people talked about a variety of topics and issues that had impacted their lives. In the study, it is argued that in areas like healthcare, inter-generational relationships, and education young people were pushed into becoming like adults, that is, into maturing prematurely.



AVAILABLE AT:

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The goal of this research report is to explore the life of youth in the Baltic States during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021). The report focuses on how young people perceive and make sense out of social as well psychological changes caused by pandemic and how they position themselves in terms of these changes. The focus of this study lies on young people between the age of 14 and 29. The report is based on online interviews with 30 respondents that were conducted in April 2021 via the platform MS Teams. Ten respondents were interviewed in each of the Baltic States.



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