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The level of civic attitudes in the Czech Republic

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of a survey of civic attitudes and virtues in more than 300 respondents from the Czech Republic. The applied survey tool was a questionnaire investigating attitudes and behaviour in various situations of everyday life. There were 46 question items in the questionnaire, covering four areas of civic attitudes (independent variables) – Good Living Together With Others, Citizens and Their Rights, Pride and Nationalism and Relationships with Oneself and One's Closest People. More than twenty years after the Velvet Revolution, the lowest results still remain in the Citizens and Their Rights category, which does not display any significant shift in perception and utilization of civic rights. The four factor level and respondents' age corresponded very closely - the younger the respondent, the lower the level. This appears to be a major concern because the younger generation shows the least developed civic attitudes in spite of not living in the past political system. This fact stresses the importance set on all the institutions educating children to become future citizens (family, school, mass media) in terms of a need to get rid of the negatives and stereotypes associated with the educational institutions of the past period.

Key words: *citizenship, civic attitudes and values, Czech Republic, variables, civic education*

Introduction

Active civic attitudes represent the pillars of stability in all societies organised on democratic principles. Since the Velvet Revolution of 1989, there have been repeated calls emphasizing the necessity of gradual development of a civic society in the Czech Republic. The main supporter and propagator of this concept has always been the former Czech president Václav Havel. In his opinion, such an attitude of citizens towards public affairs plays an important role that by its involvement prevents society from becoming over-politically oriented. His idea of *unpolitical politics* and refusal of the traditional division of political parties into left-wing and right-wing ones is both supported by and refused by many keen followers and critics. However, civic activity and education towards civic values remain the best mechanisms of prevention against possible threats to democratic development.

It is obvious that civic attitude development cannot be artificially hastened and takes places over a certain time period. It is assumed that transforming post-Communist countries into a fully-developed civil society needs the time span of two generations in order to reach its complete range. In other words, this means the generation which lived in the totalitarian communist regime only in early childhood or not at all and which grew up already in a democratic (although early capitalistic) society.

Survey Goals

The survey aimed at mapping civic attitudes of the Czech Republic citizens while taking into account a set of variables assumed to play certain different roles in their civic activities. Respondents' sex was investigated as a variance factor and we assumed that it would not show a significant difference. Where age was concerned, we estimated that a higher level of civic attitudes level will be shown in the Czech citizens of younger age and higher completed education categories. On a minor scale, there were also expected differences according to the place of residence and, as an additional variable, we included the marital status of respondents which was thought unlikely to influence the respondents' civic attitudes.

Method used

The survey tool was a questionnaire investigating attitudes and behaviour in various situations of everyday life. There were 46 Lickert-type question items in the.

The questionnaire showed a high level of reliability (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.91$).

The survey sample consisted of 308 respondents (Male $N = 125$; Female $N = 183$). Its more detailed characteristics can be found through Table No. 1 to Table No. 3. The age range of respondents was between 18 and 76 years.

Table No. 1 Respondents' Education

Education Category Completed	Number	%
Primary	85	27.6
Vocational	42	13.4
Secondary Grammar	150	48.7
University	31	10.0

Table No. 2 Place of Residence

Place of Residence	Number	%
Village	108	35.06
Small Tlen	132	42.86
Tlen	68	22.08

Table No. 3 Marital Status

Marital Status	Number	%
Single	163	52.92
Married	111	36.04
Divorced	28	9.09
Widowed	6	

Factor Analysis

Due to the very high Cronbach α reliability (0,91), the orthogonal program Varimax with critical level $|0,40|$ was used. It generated 4 factors:

Scoring: never =1 seldom =2 often = 3 very often = 4 always =5

Factor 1: Tolerance and Other people 's Rights Acknowledgement

- 27. They respect the rights of other people to be different from theirs.
- 28. They respect other people's opinions although they are different from their opinions.
- 33. They consciously hold respect for other people.
- 20. They respect minority rights.
- 14. They respect other nations.
- 30. They protect the right of other people to be what they are.
- 25. They make good neighbours in the place where they live.
- 24. They refuse corruption and bribing.

Factor: min. 8, max. 40, M=29.42, SD=5.63, median 30, ideal median 2.5. Index M/N= 3.68

Factor 2: Civic Rights Engagement (Application of Constitutional Civil Rights)

- 17. They take an active part in public discussions concerning issues like motorway construction or green countryside.
- 1. They participate in public elections.
- 26. They believe in God.
- 16. They participate in demonstrations, write or sign public petitions if they do not agree with a particular important issue.
- 13. They make donations to charities.
- 31. They actively participate in their community's social life.

Factor: min. 6, max. 30, M=13.76, SD=4.34, median 14, ideal median 15.5. Index: 2.3

Factor 3: Patriotism and Trust in Public Institutions

- 29. They are proud of our army.
- 18. They are proud of their country.
- 21. They trust the police.
- 22. They believe the politicians they have elected.
- 23. They trust the legal system.
- 6. If the national anthem is played, they join in singing and they are moved by it.
- 2. They are fans of their national sports' teams.
- 19. They would fight for their country.
- 15. They like living in their country.
- 32. They keep alive their national and regional traditions actively.

Factor: min. 10, max. 50, M=27.99, SD=6.66, median 28, ideal median 25.5. Index: 2.7

Factor 4: Respect for Traditional Social Norms and Roles.

- 10. While at work, they spend their time working.
- 7. They obey traffic rules.
- 11. They like their family members.
- 9. They go to work.
- 4. They look after their children and family.
- 5. They protect the environment.

8. They are conscious of their health and follow the guidelines of health problem prevention as a part of their lifestyle (in terms of their diet, regular medical checkups and relaxation).

12. They help other people.

3. They have good manners.

Factor: min. 9, max. 45, M=35.88, SD=5.1, median 37, ideal median 23. Index: 3.98

Index Ranking:

1. Respect for traditional social norms and roles (3.98)
2. Tolerance and respect for other people's rights (3.68)
3. Patriotism and trust in public institutions (2.7)
4. Application of constitutional civil rights (2.29)

It not only stresses the importance of both personal and family life stemming from old cultural traditions, which form the basis for education, but also low levels of active participation or need for it in civic affairs. This is perhaps a relic of the socialist times when the state 'made decisions' for its citizens and, reciprocally, they were supposed to work hard, have a family, look after it, but not participate actively in politics, nor express criticism which was considered particularly undesirable. Factor 2 (Tolerance and Respect for Other People's Rights) rank can be perceived in a positive way.

Results

Only statistically significant data with the level of significance 5%, respectively 1% are displayed here.

Factor Correlation Matrix

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Factor 1	x	0,30**	0,43**	0,49**
Factor 2	0,30**	x	0,35**	0,33**
Factor 3	0,43**	0,35**	x	0,39**
Factor 4	0,49**	0,33**	0,39**	x

** p<0,01.

All the generated factors correlate closely and significantly and influence each other.

Analysis of Variance

Variables:

- sex
- age
- education
- place of residence
- marital status

Table No. 4 Differences between Sexes

Factor	F-test	M men	M women
Application of constitutional civil rights	10.71*	12.87	14.37
Respecting traditional social norms and roles	13.12*	34.3	36.67

*p<0,05.

Women in our survey applied constitutional civil rights significantly more and they were more active in respecting traditional social norms and roles.

Table No. 5 Respondents' Age and Factors Correlation

Factor	r =
Tolerance and respect for other people's rights	0,31**
Application of constitutional civil rights	0,43**
Patriotism and trust in public institutions	0,19**
Respect for traditional social norms and roles	0,34**

*p<0,05; ** p<0,01.

The score of all four factors rises with growing age of respondents. In other words, the older the respondents are, the more tolerant and patriotic as citizens they are, they apply civil rights into practice more, they trust their country's institutions more and they are also more active in respecting social norms and roles.

Our assumption that the youngest citizens are the most active group in the civil rights area in terms of applying civil rights and freedom and that they are the most radical group with most frequent petition signers and protest demonstration participants was not confirmed, which shows that education encouraging conscious application of these rights remains at a low level in the Czech Republic.

Table No. 6 Respondents' Education and Factors

Factor	F-test	M Primary	M Vocationalen	M Secondary Grammar	M University
Tolerance and respect for other people's rights	10,50*	26,98	29,01	30,34	32,34
Application of constitutional civil rights	19,48*	11,69	12,01	15,03	15,68
Patriotism and trust in public institutions	3,38*	26,10	28,23	28,65	29,31
Respect for traditional social norms and roles	6,67*	34,01	35,56	36,50	38,44

*p<0,05;

The score for all four factors rose with the respondents' education. The higher education level the respondents complete, the more tolerant they are as citizens, they apply their constitutional civil rights in practice more often, they are more patriotic and hold more trust in public institutions and they are also more active in respecting traditional social norms and standards. This fact can be interpreted as a proof of insufficient and narrow

scale citizen learning in primary schools, which is compulsory and should provide rather extensive information about citizenship.

Place of Residence Variable

As assumed, no significant difference was shown.

Table No.7 Marital Status

Faktor	F-test	svobodný	žinatý	rozvedený	vdovec
Tolerance and respect for other people's rights	3,82*	28,73	30,28	30,02	29,56
Application of constitutional civil rights	12,33*	12,88	15,01	13,71	14,55
Respect for traditional social norms and roles rolí	8,84*	34,95	37,09	37,01	35,62

* $p < 0,05$;

The highest score in three factors was reached by married respondents and the lowest one by single respondents.

Conclusion

Although it has been more than twenty years since the Velvet Revolution, the lowest score results still remain in the Citizens and Their Rights Factor, which does not show any significant shift in perception and application of civil rights. A close correlation was discovered between the respondents' age and the 4 factor level - the younger the respondent, the lower the level. It is of major concern that the youngest generation which in spite of not living in the former political regime still does not show fully developed civic attitudes. All institutions educating children for future citizen roles, such as family, school and mass media, therefore face a challenge to change the current state of affairs. We feel that there is room for improvement here in eliminating the remains of the past educational methods leading to civic indifference and focusing on personal life as a way of escapism from active civic attitudes.