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Contemporary Family Attitudes and Values in Czech Society

WSPÓŁCZESNE POSTAWY I WARTOŚCI RODZINNE
W SPOŁECZEŃSTWIE CZESKIM

Streszczenie

Artykuł analizuje postawy i wartości rodzinne w społeczeństwie czeskim, wykorzystując interdyscyplinarne podejście obejmujące aspekty socjologiczne, religijne i kulturowe. Autor bada zmiany w postrzeganiu małżeństwa i życia rodzinnego, uwzględniając zarówno kontekst historyczny, jak i współczesny. Identyfikuje główne trendy kształtujące te postawy i wartości, kluczowe dla struktury społecznej. Celem analizy jest lepsze zrozumienie zmian w życiu rodzinnym oraz identyfikacja czynników wpływających na te wartości. Szczegółowa analiza tych trendów pozwoli również zidentyfikować aktualne wyzwania i możliwe perspektywy rozwoju rodzin. Badanie zmian w postawach i wartościach rodziny jest istotne dla zrozumienia dynamiki życia społecznego i dla opracowania skutecznych strategii społeczno-politycznych, wspierających adaptację rodzin do zmieniających się warunków społeczno-kulturowych i ekonomicznych. Analiza wartości rodzinnych jest kluczowa dla zrozumienia tych zmian i opracowania efektywnej polityki prorodzinnej, wspierającej rozwój społeczno-ekonomiczny oraz kształtowanie tożsamości kulturowej i duchowej. Celem artykułu jest poszerzenie wiedzy na temat życia rodzinnego i zachęcenie do dyskusji na temat roli rodziny w społeczeństwie czeskim oraz jej przyszłości.

Słowa kluczowe: wartości, styl życia, rodzina, Czechy, socjologia małżeństwa i rodziny, religia

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Introduction

The initial and most pivotal step in examining family life and values within Czech society is defining fundamental concepts such as attitudes and values, especially those specific to the family. In sociology and social psychology, an attitude can be defined as a relatively stable and learned tendency to respond in a certain way to objects, individuals, and situations. This disposition, which can be found in both individuals and groups, is associated with their beliefs and motivational structures.² Some social educators and sociologists posit that attitudes are inextricably linked to human values, essentially constituting their direct manifestation.³

Family attitudes are complex psychological constructs that involve the tendency to espouse specific beliefs, opinions, and sentiments that shape how individuals experience and respond to family life. From a psychological perspective, family attitudes have three principal components: cognitive (knowledge and beliefs about the family), affective (emotional reactions to family-related situations), and behavioural (behaviours and reactions resulting from these beliefs and feelings).⁴ Family attitudes emerge from socialisation processes, including the influence of family, culture, religion, and social environment, and may change with life experiences and social context.

Values constitute the moral foundation of any society, determining its culture and politics, and contributing to social stability. In European societies, values often have their roots in religious beliefs.⁵ Indeed, religion is a key part of society and plays a particularly important integrative role within it.⁶ In sociology, values are sometimes considered in relation to individuals, groups, organisations and entire societies. In sociological discourse, the term “value” typically refers to what is valuable, sought after, and important to the individual and society, and also worthy of humanity.⁷ Family values, in particular, are fundamental, enduring beliefs that are rooted in specific family groups and play a foundational role in decision-making and behavioural regulation within family life. Family values

2 Cf. T. Mądrycki, *Psychologiczne prawidłowości kształtowania się postaw*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 27–30.

3 Cf. A. Ceranek-Dadas, E. Neumann-Schmidtke, in: T. Pilch (ed.), *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, vol. 4, p. 743; M. Nakonečný, *Postoje*, in: Z. Nešpor (ed.), *Sociologická encyklopedie*, Sociologický ústav AV ČR 2018.

4 N. Hayesová, *Základy sociální psychologie*, Praha 1998, p. 69.

5 Cf. J. Kolář, *Hodnoty*, in: Z. Nešpor (ed.), *Sociologická encyklopedie...*

6 Cf. L. Hora, *Náboženství*, in: *Sociologická encyklopedie...*

7 Cf. J. Szymczyk, *Odkrywanie wartości. Z problematyki socjologiczno-aksjologicznej*, Lublin 2004, p. 7.

encompass a broad spectrum of ethical, moral, cultural, religious, social, and economic aspects. They are a crucial part of family identity and functioning and provide a specific framework for evaluating situations, relationships, and life goals in family and social life.

Values and value orientation are key components of motivation, alongside needs, interests, and attitudes. Together, they guide an individual's actions.⁸ They are typically shaped by how experiences are internalised in the mind. Individuals internalise values, embrace them as their own, and refine them based on their principles and beliefs. Values and principles serve as standards for judging one's own behaviour and that of others. Individuals continually shape and transform their values and value orientations through different life experiences. This means that value orientation can change over a lifetime as new situations arise.⁹

Examining family attitudes and values in Czech society requires looking at their psychological, cultural, and social dimensions. Research in this area focuses on how family attitudes and values are formed, their impact on family functioning and relationships, and their significance for social well-being. To understand contemporary Czech family attitudes and values, it is essential to outline the characteristics of Czech families, their perceptions of family roles, and trends in marriage. These aspects will be discussed in this article.

1. Concept of family in the context of values and attitudes to life

The family is the natural foundation of society. It encompasses legal, economic, cultural, social, and psychological dimensions. In legal and sociological terms, a family is a legally recognised social institution or community consisting of a man and a woman (in marriage) and children connected to their parents by kinship (biological or adoptive). From a personalistic and theological perspective, a family can be seen as a community of life and love. This community plays a pivotal role in transmitting, communicating, explaining, and implementing values that shape the development of individual family members and entire societies. In traditional societies, there was a clear consensus on values deemed true, enduring, and valid. These values were passed down to the next generation through various channels, including the family, neighbours, the Church, schools, and other educational institutions. In contrast, modern societies are characterised by a multitude of value systems, including apparent values, pseudo-values, and anti-values. Historically, all educational institutions and society as a whole conveyed a similar

8 Cf. P. Sak, *Proměny české mládeže*, Praha 2000, p. 65.

9 Cf. B. Kraus, *Středoškolská mládež a její svět na přelomu století*, Brno 2006, p. 61.

value system, reinforcing the value education process. In contemporary times, a multitude of value systems coexist within society, which poses a significant challenge for families who must develop the capacity to discern between genuine values and those that are merely apparent, especially given the pervasive influence of media advertising.¹⁰

Despite the significant socio-cultural shifts in modern European societies, the family unit remains a fundamental reference point in pedagogical and sociological approaches, and the primary setting for human growth and upbringing. It is within the family that individuals experience the most significant and extended period of personal and social development, shaping their views, personality, and lifestyle. In the process of implementing values in the younger generation, it is vital to demonstrate these values in the everyday life of the family and draw upon the unique patterns of the individual family unit. The actions of parents, guardians, grandparents, cousins, teachers, and educators model a system of values that is observed, imitated, or tested by children and young people.¹¹ Through the ordinary, everyday, and appropriate activities of the family, its members can develop into strong, stable, mature, and responsible individuals. The family is, therefore, regarded as the most significant environment for patterns, social norms, and interpersonal skills.¹² Despite the decline in the perceived importance of the family and the rise of peer groups, interest groups, and mass media, the family remains central in the life of every individual. The transformation of family structures and their social acceptance have undermined the family to some extent, yet it still holds a relatively high value in Czech society. The challenge remains for the state, churches, educational institutions, and all organisations to collaborate for the benefit of families, considering their needs, expectations, and the challenges brought about by ideological, socio-cultural, and educational changes. The social policy adopted in a given country should also consider the rights and duties of the family. This necessitates implementing a social policy that integrates all spheres

10 Cf. E. Osewska, J. Stala, *Formacja moralna jako przygotowanie do wyboru i realizacji wartości chrześcijańskich*, in: Andrzej Pryba (ed.), *Rodzina szkołą wartości*, Poznań 2011, p. 113–124; E. Osewska, *Value Education in the Polish Family*, in: J. Stala, J. Garmaz (eds.), *Strengthening Families*, Kraków 2016, pp. 303–316.

11 E. Osewska, *Value Education in the Polish Family...*

12 Cf. L. Muchová, *Budete mými svědky. Dialogické rozvíjení křesťanské identity ve světonázorově pluralitní společnosti – pedagogická výzva*, Brno 2011, p. 11.

of family activity.¹³ Consequently, it is pertinent to ask whether social policy in the Czech Republic can be considered family-friendly.

Despite the Czech Republic's proximity to Poland, the circumstances and status of Czech families remain largely unexamined in Polish contexts. Therefore, the author aims to enhance Polish readers' understanding of the familial attitudes and pro-family values declared by Czechs. Empirical research conducted in the Czech Republic shows that the family institution continues to hold a relatively high value within Czech society. When asked about the fundamental values that guide their lives, respondents indicated a preference for close partnerships and friendships. Middle-aged and older respondents place greater emphasis on the value of family life and parenthood than younger respondents. Notably, 86% of the youngest generation of Czechs (18–29 years) consider family life and raising children to be important life values. However, Czechs under 30 place greater emphasis on the non-family sphere, including exploring the world, self-fulfillment, and developing personal interests. Younger respondents place more emphasis on financial security than older generations, viewing it as essential for becoming independent and establishing their own households and families. As a result, they highly value a rewarding job that helps achieve their goals. There is a notable statistical difference regarding the importance placed on finances, travel, self-fulfillment through work, and leisure time.¹⁴ This reflects a progressive reorientation of values in Czech society, with a gradual shift toward individualistic and consumerist tendencies and an increasing emphasis on professional roles.

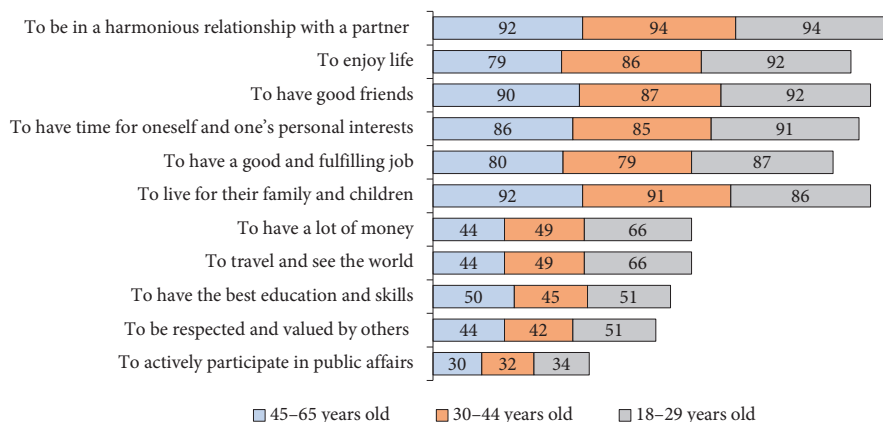
The shift in life values among young Czechs is accompanied by the belief that life goals can be achieved without necessarily starting a family, as illustrated in the first chart.

The family is especially associated with security, acceptance, trust, care, and a sense of emotional fulfilment for its members, as well as their strong bonds. However, empirical research shows that contemporary Czech society places greater emphasis on individual development over building family ties. This shift weakens family-oriented attitudes and the formation of family communities. The promotion of individualism, particularly by mainstream media, reinforces personal choices and decisions, which leads to a departure from traditional family life patterns. Constant decision-making becomes a necessity rather than an option, as it

13 Cf. G. Leslie, *The Family in Social Context*, New York 1976, pp. 25–261; Survey report, *Polityka rodzinna państwa wobec rodzin – oceny i oczekiwania*, in: E. Osewska, J. Stala (eds.), *Rodzina w społeczeństwie – relacje i wyzwania*, Kraków 2019, pp. 109–130.

14 Cf. L. Rabušic, B.E. Chromková Manea, *Hodnoty a postoje v České republice 1991–2017*, Brno 2018.

involves adopting ideas that are contrary to an individual's value system. Families and family lifestyles are no longer constrained by established patterns; instead, they can adapt to new cultural assumptions promoted or imposed by the media, which favour the emergence of diverse forms of family life.¹⁵



In descending order from the oldest to the youngest generation.
Responses: "Very important" and "Rather important".

Chart 1. Life values (%)

Source: Stabilita rodiny a porozchodová péče o děti ve veřejném mínění 2020.

Given how the media often portray families as environments fraught with abuse and violence, the Czech public is aware that families can sometimes be a source of tension and conflict, as well as a limiting factor for personal decision-making. Surveys reveal that only about a quarter of respondents do not view the family as a source of tension, and a similar proportion see the family as an obstacle to personal decision-making and development.¹⁶

2. Perceptions of the family and its diversity as family roles change

A synthesis of sociological analyses, research reports, and other scientific publications shows that Czech society is quite tolerant of diverse family structures. This tolerance is reflected in attitudes towards marriage and family, the opinions

¹⁵ Cf. W. Świątkiewicz, *Rodzina współczesna w Polsce – ujęcie socjologiczne*, in: E. Osewska, J. Stala (eds.), *Rodzina w społeczeństwie...*, pp. 17–23.

¹⁶ Cf. J. Palonciová, P. Höhne, N. Křečková Tůmová, K. Svobodová, L. Vidovičová, *Zpráva o rodině 2023*, RILSA, Praha 2023, p. 17.

expressed by respondents, and social practices.¹⁷ The concept of family is no longer as clear-cut as it once was in traditional society. In everyday Czech life, specific terms for marital and parental roles are becoming less common, with more general terms such as “partner” and “parent” gaining greater currency. There is a relatively high level of social acceptance for couples living together without being married, and children born out of wedlock are almost equally regarded as those born to married parents.¹⁸ Over the past fifty years, there has been a notable shift in the social perception of the family. The traditional idea of family as an institution defined by marriage is gradually being replaced by a more inclusive understanding of family life. Today, the family is evolving to encompass a broader range of relationships, including not only biological but also socio-cultural ties. While this change is happening quickly, the importance of family as a source of social support is still valued by more than 60% of Czech society.

As in other EU countries, the number of people in the Czech Republic with a negative view of family and family life is gradually increasing, with 65% of the oldest respondents and 66% of the youngest respondents holding this view. Interestingly, the family is still seen as a source of emotional support, especially among middle-aged respondents. Concurrently, the introduction of civil partnerships in the Czech Republic has made it difficult to clearly define what respondents mean by “family.”

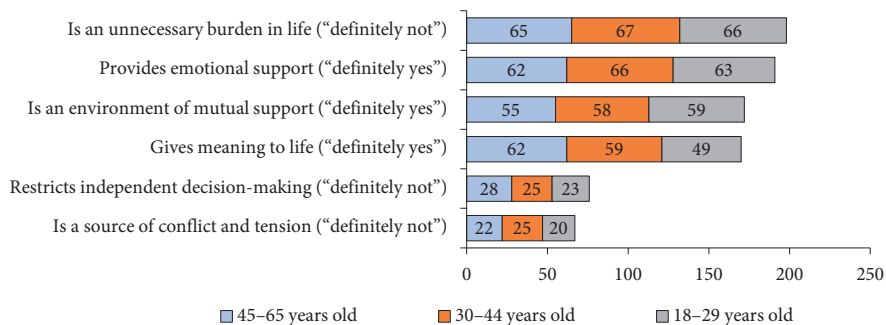


Chart 2. Perception of the family as an institution (%)

Source: *Stabilita rodiny a porozchodová péče o děti ve veřejném mínění 2020*.

¹⁷ Cf. V. Kuchařová, J. Barvíková, p. Höhne, O. Nešporová, J. Paloncyová et al., *Zpráva o rodině 2020*, VÚPSV, Praha 2020, pp. 18–25.

¹⁸ Cf. *ibidem*.

The most common types of families and family arrangements in the Czech Republic include:

- Cohabitation: Partners living together and possibly raising children without being formally married.
- Single-parent families: A single parent raising children due to a breakup, the death of a partner, or a conscious decision to raise a child alone.
- Reconstructed families: New relationships where a child lives with a step-parent and step-siblings.
- Homoparental families: Same-sex parents raising children.
- Single life without a partner and without children: Individuals who choose to live alone without having children.

In highlighting the different forms of family life in Czech society, it is worth noting that the family has historically been a valued institution in the Czech Republic, even though its importance has been undermined several times by totalitarian regimes.¹⁹ Today, there are efforts to redefine traditional concepts of marriage and family and to gradually replace them with new interpretations. This shift is blurring the traditional notion of the family as a social unit based on the marriage between a man and a woman.

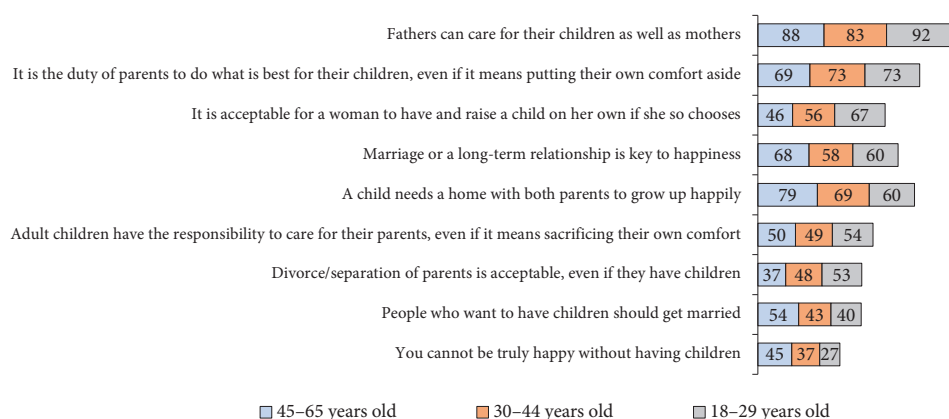
As family models and family life in Czech society change, so does the perception of gender roles. Modern women are increasingly emphasising their right and need for professional and personal fulfilment outside the family sphere – a view strongly supported by the media. At the same time, the role of men in the family is becoming more prominent.

Traditionally, Czech society has recognised that fathers are just as competent as mothers in caring for children. This conviction is shared by both sexes, although in practice, it is mainly mothers who care for children under the age of three. Younger generations, especially those under 30, are more accepting of the idea that men should be equally involved in childcare.²⁰ Conversely, those who already have children tend to lean towards traditional role divisions. The changing attitudes of younger generations are not limited to men's role in the family. Younger people increasingly believe that a woman can successfully raise a child on her own without a partner. By contrast, the older generation believes that a child needs both parents to develop happily and is less likely to accept the separation or divorce of parents with dependent children.

¹⁹ Cf. P. Machonin, *Česká společnost a sociologické poznání. Problémy společenské transformace a modernizace od poloviny šedesátých let 20. století do současnosti*, Praha 2005.

²⁰ Cf. N. Křečková-Tůmová, O. Nešporová, K. Svobodová, J. Paloncycová, S. Höhne, *Rodiny s dětmi v letech 2018–2022*, RILSA, Praha 2023.

Views on parenthood also clearly differ between generations. Older and younger respondents have different opinions on single parenthood: 46% of the oldest respondents support it, while this figure rises to 67% among the youngest group, showing a 21% difference. There is a slightly smaller difference in views on parenthood as an essential condition for a happy life. Among the youngest generation, 27% see parenthood as essential for a fulfilled life, compared to 37% of the middle generation and 45% of the oldest generation. Across all age groups, there is a strong emphasis on responsible and caring parenting, even at the expense of parents' personal interests.²¹ In contrast, supporting ageing parents is viewed as a duty that should be fulfilled even at a personal cost. This belief is held by half of the respondents across all age groups. This underscores how deeply rooted family values, especially respect for elders, are in Czech society, regardless of changing gender roles and family structures.²²



In descending order from the youngest generation. Responses "I strongly agree" and "I tend to agree".

Chart 3. Approaches to family, partnership and parenthood (%)

Source: *Stabilita rodiny a porozchodová péče o děti ve veřejném mínění 2020*.

In summary, the Czech family is undergoing profound changes, with traditional understandings giving way to alternative forms of family life. These changes are also leading to an evolution in the perception of male and female roles. Younger generations show greater openness to diverse family roles, which reflects rapid ideological, social, and cultural changes. However, traditional values

²¹ Cf. *Zpráva o rodině 2023...*, p. 19.

²² Cf. *ibidem*.

such as responsible parenting and caring for ageing parents remain deeply rooted, highlighting the persistence of certain aspects of Czech family culture.

3. Changes in the perception of gender roles in Czech society

Between 2018 and 2021, research was conducted to understand the evolving perceptions of gender roles in Czech society.²³ The results show significant changes, particularly regarding the view of active fatherhood, women's participation in the workforce, and the role of parents in caring for children and other family members. In today's pursuit of social prestige and professional success, many men feel overwhelmed by their professional responsibilities and frustrated by the need to manage the financial, caring, and educational aspects of family life. At the same time, they face growing demands from increasingly independent women. Today's women make their own decisions about their lives, often leading independent lives, and rejecting motherhood as a form of enslavement.

Active fatherhood and childcare

The Czech study demonstrated that parents express support for active fatherhood and acknowledge that fathers can care for children just as effectively as mothers. However, single parents, especially women who have separated from their child's father, were less likely to agree with this view. This is due to their personal experiences, as in Czech society, it is predominantly mothers who take on childcare responsibilities.²⁴

Role of women and social challenges

The lengthy maternity leave and persistent sex pay gap in the Czech Republic present significant social challenges. The period of intensive parenthood, especially when children are of pre-school age, requires a high level of caregiving commitment. Most parents agree that a mother's employment does not have a detrimental impact on her relationship with her children. They emphasise that the quality

23 Cf. *Rodiny s dětmi v letech 2018–2022...*, pp. 24–27. The objective of this research was to conduct a comparative analysis of different family types in terms of their living conditions, value orientations, attitudes and selected areas of daily life. For the comparative analysis, data from the *Kompleksowe badanie sytuacji rodzin i seniorów* („RILSA”) project, implemented by the Institute of Labour and Social Affairs between 2018 and 2021, were used to examine the characteristics of various family types. The comprehensive study was conducted in several stages: 2018 – Families with three or more children. 2018 – Reconstructed families. 2019 – Single-parent families. 2020 – Childless. 2021 – Complete families.

24 Cf. *Zpráva o rodině 2020...*, pp. 145–151; *Rekonstituované rodiny 2019...*

of time spent together is more important than the quantity, which often entails entrusting childcare responsibilities to institutions outside the family.

Challenges for single mothers

Single mothers, who are the primary caregivers for their children, often have to juggle work and home responsibilities in order to generate sufficient financial resources. Research suggests that one in three single mothers, in addition to their regular income, earn supplementary income from part-time work, contract jobs, or welfare benefits.²⁵ These women frequently have to balance work and family responsibilities, which can be challenging.

Preference for remote working

Parents across various family structures highly value the option of remote working, whether on a full-time or part-time basis. Those with more than two children are especially supportive of this form of employment, indicating the need for flexible working arrangements to better manage family responsibilities.²⁶

Caring for relatives

The issue of caring for close relatives, including children, the disabled, and the elderly, is becoming increasingly prevalent in Czech society. This care can be conceptualised as comprising two key dimensions: physical and emotional. The physical dimension, which encompasses basic needs, can be met by external services, such as paid caregivers. In contrast, the emotional dimension, which includes closeness, affection, and responsibility, is indispensable and irreplaceable. The transfer of values, social skills, and life experiences from relatives to children is crucial for their development.²⁷

Investing in the family

Investing in the family and the work done within it are of paramount importance, not only for the benefit of the family itself but also for the greater good of society. Unfortunately, this importance is often underestimated. In Czech society, there is a widespread belief that both partners should be able to pursue their careers and contribute equally to the family budget. A 2017 study showed that less than half of the population believes in the traditional roles where the man is the

25 Cf. *Zpráva o rodině 2020...*, pp. 145–151; *Rekonstituované rodiny 2019...*

26 Cf. *Rekonstituované rodiny 2019...*

27 Cf. *Rekonstituované rodiny 2019...*

breadwinner and the woman takes care of the household and family.²⁸ Men were more likely than women to support this traditional division of roles (52% vs. 45%), but this attitude tends to shift with higher levels of education.

Contribution to family and household maintenance

Most surveyed family members with children believe that both parents should equally share the responsibility for the family's financial upkeep. A similar, though somewhat less strong, sentiment is observed regarding the sharing of domestic duties. There is a growing recognition that a flexible approach to the division of parental and professional roles is crucial for the well-being of families and for the effective management of home and work life.²⁹

In the Czech Republic, evolving perceptions of the family, family ties, and family life models are shifting the understanding of gender roles. Empirical surveys conducted between 2018 and 2021 demonstrate a notable increase in the acceptance of active fatherhood and greater flexibility in balancing work and family roles. Nevertheless, significant social issues remain, including the challenges of long maternity leave, the pay gap, and the difficulties single mothers face in combining work and family responsibilities.

Investing in the family and properly valuing the caregiving work done by parents is essential for the well-being of Czech society. Flexible working arrangements that enable better management of family responsibilities are becoming increasingly popular and desirable. The joint participation of both partners in household maintenance and responsibilities is now seen as a fundamental aspect of the contemporary Czech family model.

4. Getting married

The majority of young people in the Czech Republic today view marriage as a personal choice primarily for the satisfaction and happiness of the partners involved. This perception has both positive and negative implications. The institution of marriage is no longer regarded as an end in itself but rather as a means of achieving personal happiness. Consequently, when a marriage fails to meet the spouses' expectations or is no longer satisfactory, couples are quick to seek a divorce. According to data from the Statistical Office of the Czech Republic, the divorce rate in the country ranged from 47% to 50% between 2005 and 2010. The highest recorded rate of marriages ending in divorce was 50% in 2010.

²⁸ L. Rabušic, B.E. Chromková Manea, *Hodnoty a postoje...*

²⁹ *Rekonstituované rodiny* 2019...

By 2012, this figure had decreased to 44%, the level observed at the beginning of the new millennium. By 2021, the rate had further decreased to 39.7%, although it remains relatively high. The average duration of marriage has been increasing over the past two decades, with slight fluctuations, rising from 12.9 years to 13.7 years between 2011 and 2023.

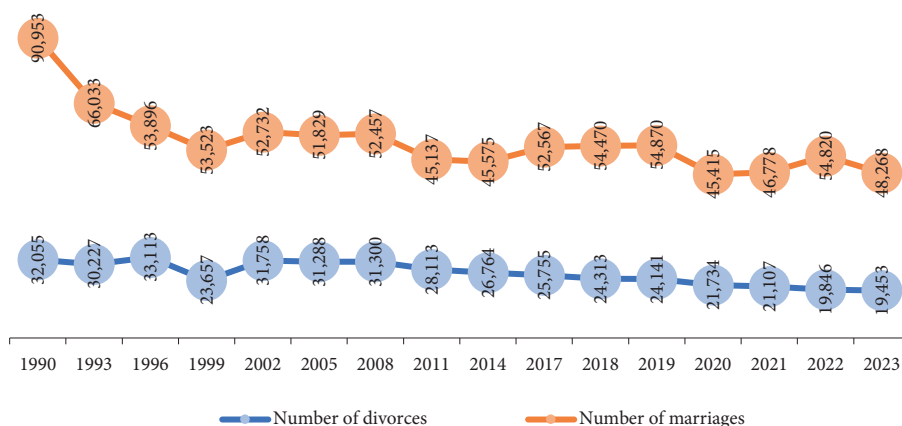


Chart 4. Number of marriages and divorces in the Czech Republic

Source: Český statistický úřad (2024).

4.1. Number of marriages and divorces in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, civil marriages are clearly preferred over church weddings, and this trend has become more pronounced in recent years. Current data shows that 79.4% of marriages are civil ceremonies, while only 18.9% are church weddings. This is consistent with the country's general religiosity and relatively low rates of religious practice. Mixed ceremonies, which combine civil and religious elements, are quite rare, making up just 1.5% of all marriages.³⁰

An analysis of these trends reveals significant social, cultural, ideological, and religious transformations within Czech society.

³⁰ According to data from the Statistical Office of the Czech Republic in 2024.

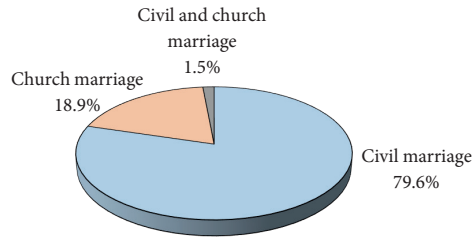


Chart 5. MARRIAGE TYPES (2013–2023)

Source: Český statistický úřad (2024).

The principal factors contributing to the growing popularity of civil marriages include:

- **Secularization of society:** The Czech Republic is one of the most secular countries in Europe. The growing number of people identifying as non-believers or as having no religious affiliation also contributes to the preference for civil ceremonies.
- **Flexibility and affordability:** Civil marriages offer more flexibility in terms of venue and ceremony format. Young couples can personalise the ceremony to match their preferences and ideas. Organising a civil wedding is often simpler than a church wedding. With fewer religious procedures and formal requirements, it is more affordable for many couples.

The family unit reflects the various challenges and changes that are inherent to societal structures. It serves as a mirror to state policies, social beliefs, and media portrayals of family life.³¹ Recent demographic and social changes in the Czech Republic show two notable patterns: delayed marriage and increased education and social awareness. Recent years have witnessed an increase in the average age of marriage, which has resulted in couples who are more mature and aware of their choices. Older couples often prefer less formal and more personal ceremonies. At the same time, rising education levels and greater social awareness have contributed to a more liberal attitude towards the institution of marriage and a higher acceptance of civil marriage.

4.2. Catholic church marriages

Recent statistical data and in-depth sociological research indicate a growing trend towards church marriages. Although the initial year of the COVID-19 pandemic

31 Cf. W. Świątkiewicz, *Rodzina współczesna w Polsce...*, pp. 17–19.

in 2020 saw a decline of nearly a quarter in church marriages compared to the previous year, the number has been rising since 2021. The overall number of marriages in 2022 continued to be affected by pandemic restrictions, as Catholic church marriages require at least six months of preparation. The sacrament of marriage in the Catholic Church is more than just a religious symbol or experience; it is, first and foremost, a sacrament. Couples preparing for this sacrament must be adequately informed of its significance as their vow before God involves promises of love, respect, and fidelity “until death.” This commitment is seen as an invitation from Jesus to incorporate these values into their daily lives.³²

Catholic marriages account for between 8% and 9% of all marriages in the Czech Republic. This reflects a demographic trend in Czech society, where many believe that love and respect are more important than the formal status of a relationship. Consequently, a relatively small proportion of Czechs choose Catholic marriage.

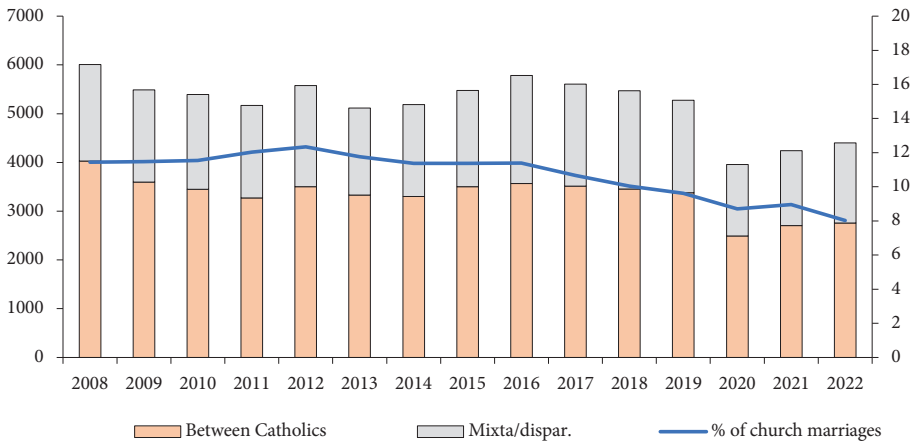


Chart 6. Proportion of Catholic marriages among all marriages

Source: Ecclesiastical Data Analysis Department of the Conference of the Czech Episcopate (2023).

A noticeable shift in attitudes towards marriage and family is occurring in Czech society. The younger generation holds different principles compared to previous generations. Many young Czechs view church vows as less significant, more binding, and more demanding, so they are more reluctant to enter into

³² The data is from the year 2023, collected by the Ecclesiastical Data Analysis Department of the Conference of the Czech Episcopate.

a lifelong sacramental union. The growing prominence of individualism and personal values, including self-development, has led to a preference for more unique and creative civil ceremonies. These ceremonies often take place in unconventional settings, such as forest clearings or farms.

4.3. The institution of same-sex partnerships in the Czech Republic

The latest statistics on registered civil partnerships in the Czech Republic date from the beginning of 2020. Collected by the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences (SOÚ AV ČR), they provide important insights into the legalisation of same-sex relationships. The institution of registered civil partnerships was established on 1 July 2006, following the enactment of *Act No. 115/2006 Sb. on registered same-sex partnerships*.³³

Between mid-2006 and the end of 2019, a total of 3,625 couples entered into registered civil partnerships. By the end of 2019, 2,710 of these couples were still together, which means that 915 partnerships had dissolved during this period. The available data does not specify whether these dissolutions were due to the death of a partner or a mutual decision to end the relationship. The absence of comprehensive data limits a full understanding of the dynamics involved. Approximately 300 individuals who have entered into registered civil partnerships in the Czech Republic are foreign nationals, with a significant number being Slovak, reflecting the close relationship between citizens of the two countries. Data on registered civil partnerships is not centrally maintained by the Central Statistical Office of the Czech Republic (ČSÚ). Instead, it is collected at the regional level by civil registry offices in the fourteen provinces. Notably, the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences takes on the responsibility of gathering this data from regional registries every six months.

Since January 2024, it has been possible to enter into a civil partnership at any civil registry office. In February 2024, the Chamber of Deputies approved an amendment to Law No 115 of 2006, which changed the term “registered civil partnership” to “civil partnership” and granted additional rights to partners, such as the right to own joint property or receive a widow’s or widower’s pension. The amendment was approved in April and will come into force next year.

³³ SOÚ AV ČR, *Známé neznámé registrované partnerství. Statistiky registrovaných partnerství v Česku po 14 letech. Tisková zpráva. 7. července 2020.* (Known unknown registered partnerships. Statistics of registered partnerships in the Czech Republic after 14 years, Press release, 7 July 2020).

5. Selected aspects of the structure of Czech families

When it comes to family size in the Czech Republic, most families have one or two children. In 2017, only one in seven children was the third or later child in their family. Full families typically have one or two children, with fewer than 8% having three or more. Single-parent families typically have one child, and less than 5% of single-parent families are raising three or more children. Notably, there is a clear correlation between the number of children in a family and the mother's level of education. Additionally, the higher a woman's education level, the more likely she is to be married when she has children.³⁴

In 2021, there were about 4.5 million households in the Czech Republic, with an average household size of 2.3 persons, including children. The largest group was two-person households (1.46 million, or 33%), followed by one-person households (1.34 million, or 30%). Three-person households numbered almost 800,000 (17.7%), while four-person households were slightly fewer, at about 700,000 (15.6%). About 160,000 households were five-person households, or 3.6% of the total, and households with more than five persons accounted for only 0.8%.³⁵

One-person households show distinct demographic trends, particularly in terms of age and gender. In the 25–44 age group, there are significantly more men living alone than women, with 191,000 single men compared to 83,000 women. The numbers even out in the 45–49 age group, but from age 50 onwards, women predominate. The largest number of single women is in the 65+ age category, with almost 480,000 women, making up 35.8% of all single-person households. In the same age group, there are 191,000 men, accounting for 14.3% of all single-person households. Overall, those aged 65 and over account for 50.1% of all one-person households.³⁶

Two-person households are mostly composed of couples (77.8%) and parents with their children (20.1%). In 9.9% of two-person households, the child is under 24, while in 4.3% of cases, the child is an adult over 45 living with a parent. Both types of these households are predominantly made up of mothers and their sons. In households with children up to 24, the mother is the primary carer in 88.9% of cases, with 53.5% of these children being sons. In households where the child is over 45, the mother is present in 87.8% of cases, and in 74.1% of these households, the mother cohabits with her son.³⁷

34 Cf. O. Hampl, *O situaci rodin v ČR, které mají nebo (ne)plánují 3 a více dětí*, Praha 2019.

35 Cf. M. Korychová, *Kolik je nás v jedné domácnosti*, „Statistika & My“ 12 (2022) 6, pp. 20–21.

36 Ibidem.

37 Cf. ibidem.

In three-person households, 81.4% consist of two parents and a child, with 75.7% having a child under the age of 24. Single parents with two children make up 10% of three-person households, while 8.6% are other configurations, such as two partners living with a parent or a parent living with a child and grandchild.

Four-person households are primarily “full families”, comprising both parents and two children, making up 90.7% of such households. The most common age difference between children in these families is three years (22.3%), followed by two years (19.7%), and four years (17.9%). Children born in the same year are typically twins. It should be noted that the determining factor for the concept of a household is the living relationship rather than biological parentage. Consequently, children in the same household may have different biological parents and be half-siblings. In larger households, five-person families with two – parents and three children are the most common, representing 77.0% of these households. The remaining 23% are mostly three-generation households, usually consisting of a full family with children and grandparents.

6. The influence of religiosity on family attitudes and values

The current social, cultural, ideological, religious, and moral landscape in the Czech Republic is largely shaped by remnants of its past system. The moral-religious crisis that began under communism, and in some cases even earlier, manifested in various ways, such as a lack of work ethic, alcohol abuse, avoidance of obligations, weakening of the institution of marriage and family, and marginalisation of churches and religious groups. After the fall of communism in 1989, Czech citizens quickly adopted values and attitudes typical of developed European countries. This shift included a changed perception of the importance of marriage and family, increased acceptance of cohabitation, and a growing number of children being raised outside of marriage. Marriage is no longer seen as a fundamental aspect of social life. More people, driven by the pursuit of personal pleasure, do not see the necessity of marriage and may even perceive its benefits as minimal.

It is generally assumed that religious individuals tend to hold more conservative and reserved views on marriage and family matters. According to Nešpor, the level of conservatism also depends on the frequency of religious practice. It is important to note that simply professing a faith does not necessarily mean accepting the Church’s official stance on moral issues. Those who identify with individual spirituality, rather than a specific church, are often as liberal in matters

of marriage and family as non-believers.³⁸ Religiosity and faith practices significantly impact the stability and quality of marriage. Some authors suggest that religious individuals are more likely to show understanding towards their partner, a willingness to work on the relationship, effective communication, devotion, generosity, and to make time for each other.³⁹

A 2017 study from the European Values Study showed that the Czech Republic had the highest percentage of individuals not affiliated with any religious organisations (75%) among European countries and regions, with 50% identifying as non-believers and 14% as atheists.⁴⁰ Conversely, the 2021 Census (National population and housing census) indicates that of the Czech Republic's 10,521,167 people, 70% declared a religious affiliation. Of this group, 2,334,486 identified as Christian believers.⁴¹

Specifically, 13.4% (985,162 people) declared their affiliation to the Catholic Church, while 68% (1,588,451 people) had no confessional affiliation.⁴² The number of baptized in the Czech Republic, according to 2018 ČBK statistics, is estimated to be around 4.5 million. This current number is lower than the previous figure, which is related to a higher proportion of baptised people in older age groups. Regular attendance at Sunday mass is reported by only 3.5% of the population.⁴³

Sociological research and other studies conducted after the fall of communism in the Czech Republic on contemporary religious situation in society reveal complex processes that significantly affect the dynamics of family life. Secularisation, globalisation, religious pluralism, individualism, the high percentage of non-believers, changing values, the declining authority of traditional institutions and churches, and the widespread interest in supernatural phenomena and the occult all profoundly affect the transmission of religious, traditional, and cultural values within families. These factors complicate the natural spiritual and religious development of the younger generation.

38 Cf. Z.R. Nešpor, *Rodina/domácnost jako náboženská skupina v procesu transformace*, "Lidé města" 12 (2010) 1, p. 53.

39 Cf. M. Parise, F. Gatti, R. Iafrate, *Religiosity, Marital Quality and Couple Generativity in Italian Couples Belonging to a Catholic Spiritual Association: A Quali-Quantitative Study*, "Journal of Religion and Health" 56 (2017), pp. 1856–1869.

40 Cf. L. Rabušic, B.E. Chromková Manea, *Hodnoty a postoje...*, p. 87.

41 Cf. ČSÚ, *ČSÚ představil první výsledky, Sčítání 2021*.

42 Cf. *ibidem*.

43 Data collected by the Ecclesiastical Data Analysis Department of the Conference of the Czech Episcopate (2024).

When religiosity is expressed through various human experiences, processes, and mental states, it is typically divided into interrelated spheres: cognition, attitude, and action. These correspond to religious awareness, religious feelings, and religious decisions, along with aspects connected to religion as a socio-cultural reality: bonding with a community of believers, religious practices, and religious morality.⁴⁴

Empirical research has demonstrated the significant impact of family on the formation of value preferences among the younger generation. The family remains the primary environment for children's religious formation. Studies indicate that when parents consider religion important, about 40% of their children inherit this attitude. Conversely, when parents view religion as unimportant or negative, nearly 100% of their children adopt this outlook.⁴⁵

In the Czech Republic, the younger generation (30–35 years old) shows less inclination to pass on their religious beliefs to their children compared to older generations. However, in families with traditional religiosity, the transmission of religious identity is evident, with only one-fifth of traditional believers having adopted their religiosity outside the familial community. This underscores the pivotal role of the family in shaping religious attitudes. In contrast, non-traditional forms of religiosity, which have emerged more recently after the dissolution of the Communist regime, are less likely to be inherited within families.⁴⁶

Analysis of the statistics of religiosity suggests that Christianity is unlikely to remain the dominant religious current in Czech society in the future. However, it continues to be the spiritual foundation for those who consciously choose Christian values as crucial and meaningful for their lives and the lives of their families. It is hoped that these individuals will demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility in ensuring that Christian faith, values, and attitudes are passed on to younger generations.

Conclusions

The political, economic, social, cultural, ideological, and religious changes in the Czech Republic are undoubtedly influencing the perception, adoption, rejection, and implementation of family values. There is evidence of fundamental shifts in attitudes towards marriage and family as important values in Czech society,

44 Cf. C. Walesa, *Rozwój religijności człowieka*, vol. 1, Lublin 2005, pp. 14–50.

45 Cf. R. Tichý, M. Vávra, *Náboženství z jiného úhlu*, CDK, Brno 2012, pp. 29–33.

46 Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 41–42; A. Paleček, R. Vido, *Náboženské vyznání v České republice z perspektivy inter- a intragenerační transmise*, „Naše společnost” (2014) 2, pp. 24–35.

especially among young adults. While the family still holds a high position in the hierarchy of values, for the 19 to 26-year-old demographic, it is increasingly seen alongside values such as friendship, enjoyment of life, and personal interests. The younger generation in the Czech Republic is notably open to economic, social, cultural, and ideological influences from Western Europe and the United States. Following the collapse of the communist system and its ideology, Czech society gained the freedom to make its own value choices, leading to the adoption of external influences. Traditional values, principles, and norms are being replaced by ideas perceived as more modern. This shift towards individualised values has transformed the younger generation's attitude towards the family as a social institution or community, family roles, and the importance of religion in marriage and family life.

Despite these socio-cultural shifts, the family remains a pivotal institution in Czech society. Although traditional family values are deeply embedded in Czech culture, they continue to evolve in response to dynamic social changes. Transformations in social, economic, and cultural paradigms profoundly influence the nature of the family, family dynamics, and the transfer of values across generations. Families play a vital role in adapting and reproducing social norms and value systems. The rapid advancement of technology and globalisation trends, including secularisation, are giving rise to novel forms of family organisation and a reinterpretation of traditional family roles. In light of these changes, it is essential for families to be flexible and capable of adapting to the evolving social and economic landscape. Supporting families in adapting to these challenges is of paramount importance. With these considerations in mind, contemporary social policies must consider the uniqueness, needs, rights, and responsibilities of families, including their integrity and autonomy.

Studying the changes in societal values and the transformation of family structures is key to understanding the development of society. Ongoing research and discussions within various social groups about the family are vital for formulating effective family policies and strategies to support a harmonious and healthy family environment in the Czech Republic. The Roman Catholic Church in the Czech Republic has the potential to play a significant role in presenting, promoting, and forming family values. This can be achieved by supporting pastoral initiatives that aim to strengthen family ties and foster their harmonious development.

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CONTEMPORARY FAMILY ATTITUDES AND VALUES IN CZECH SOCIETY

Summary

The article analyses family attitudes and values in Czech society through an interdisciplinary approach considering sociological, religious, and cultural perspectives. The author explores shifts in the perception of marriage and family life, taking into account both historical and contemporary contexts. It identifies the key trends influencing these attitudes and values, which are vital to the social structure. The analysis aims to enhance understanding of changes in family life and to identify factors influencing these values. A detailed examination of these trends will also reveal current challenges and possible development prospects for families. Studying changes in family attitudes and values is important for understanding social dynamics and for formulating effective socio-political strategies to help families adapt to evolving socio-cultural and economic conditions. Analyzing family values is crucial for comprehending these changes and developing effective pro-family policies that support socio-economic growth and the formation of cultural and spiritual identity. The aim of the article is to expand knowledge of family life and stimulate discussion on the family's role and future in Czech society.

Keywords: values, lifestyle, family, Czech Republic, sociology of marriage and family, religion

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