

Value orientations in our society

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Since the beginning of 2004 the Centre for Public Opinion Research of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic have cooperated on a research project called "Social and cultural cohesion in a differentiated society." The project is financially supported by the Ministry of labour and social affairs of the Czech Republic and it is executed by the employees of the Centre for social and economic strategy (CESES), a research department of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Charles University in Prague, and by the employees of the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences. The project includes some partial public opinion polls, which are gradually executed by the CVVM within a continuous research called Our Society on a representative sample of respondents over the age of fifteen representing the population of the Czech Republic. In October 2004 a research on this basis was executed¹, in which respondents answered, among others, several questions dealing with their priorities and value orientation.

First, all respondents were asked a question surveying their own hierarchy of individual spheres of human life. Respondents obtained a card with six selected areas and they were asked to arrange them according to their significance.²

Table 1: Placement of life areas according to their significance for the respondent (%)

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	Doesn't know	Average
Family	77,2	13,3	4,9	2,9	0,9	0,4	0,4	1,38
Friends and acquaintances	10,4	32,9	31,1	20,5	3,7	1,0	0,4	2,77
Work	8,7	38,3	24,9	19,9	4,7	1,9	1,6	2,79
Free time	2,1	8,9	28,6	38,8	14,5	5,9	1,2	3,73
Public activity, involvement, politics	0,6	2,4	3,7	10,6	52,1	25,7	4,9	4,98
Religious life	0,8	4,1	6,2	5,4	19,1	59,2	5,2	5,27

Source: CVVM, Our society (Naše společnost) survey, 04-10.

Results recorded in Table 1 (which presents the relative frequency of individual placements of relevant areas and a total average of placements for each area) clearly prove that from a general point of view family definitely presents the far most important sphere of life. More than three quarters of respondents placed family in the first place. The respondents, who did not place family on the top of the scale, were primarily young and single people without children, more frequently men than women. The divorced and those, who live alone in their household, also mentioned family slightly less frequently than the others.

Friends and acquaintances together with work placed second and third, almost with no difference as far as total average of placements is concerned and only with little differences in individual placements. On average, qualified workers (average 2.28), highly qualified specialized employees or managers (2.39), unemployed (2.62), people between the age of 30 and 44 years (2.54) and 45 and 59 years (2.63) placed work higher. Students (3.42) or young people between the age of 15 and 19 (3.47) placed work significantly lower. Work has relatively higher significance for men (2.68) than for women (2.90). On the contrary, friends and acquaintances are placed relatively higher by young people from the age of 15 to 19 (2.06) and to a lesser degree from 20 to 29 years of age (2.55), often students (2.11).

¹ The survey was executed from 11 to 18 October 2004. On the whole, 1058 respondents were inquired.

² Question: "How significant are the spheres of human life on the card for you? Arrange them from 1 to 6, while 1 is the most significant. a) Friends and acquaintances, b) public activity, involvement, politics, c) family, d) religious life, e) work, f) free time."

Free time placed fourth with a relatively significant distance from work. Similarly to friends, young people from the age of 15 to 19 (3.15), respectively students (3.21) placed this area on average higher than the others. In comparison with other groups, free time is relatively more significant to non-qualified workers (3.52) and to the unemployed (3.47).

People assign noticeably smaller significance to politics. Only 6.7 % of respondents placed politics among the three first areas, which is even less than the number of those, who placed religious life in one of the first three places (11.1 %). Still, as far as total average is concerned, politics and public activity placed higher than religion, because religion placed last much more frequently than politics (59.2 % in comparison to 25.7 %). It is obvious that religion is much more important to those respondents who believe in God (4.06) than for atheists (5.75).

The order of some values was surveyed in the same way as the hierarchy of the spheres of life in the first question.³

Table 2: Order of values according to importance for the respondent (%)

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	Doesn't know	Average
Truth	26,8	18,4	15,5	13,2	10,1	6,5	5,2	2,2	2,1	3,13
Individual freedom	27,0	13,7	10,2	11,3	7,6	10,7	9,3	7,7	2,5	3,68
Humanity	11,5	15,1	14,2	12,0	12,3	14,1	10,9	7,2	2,7	4,24
Mutual responsibility	9,5	13,8	14,5	12,9	14,7	9,7	11,1	10,8	3,0	4,41
Equality of people	7,2	16,1	11,4	12,0	10,6	10,6	11,2	17,0	3,9	4,71
Fairness of social differences	9,6	8,0	11,0	11,6	15,2	11,2	15,5	14,2	3,7	4,89
Solidarity with those in need	4,4	7,4	12,8	14,0	13,7	16,9	16,2	11,0	3,6	5,03
Patriotism	3,3	5,9	8,2	10,0	12,2	16,2	15,7	24,6	3,9	5,66

Source: CVVM, Our society (Naše společnost), survey 04-10.

It is evident from Table 2 that the differences between the overall placements of the individual, more or less abstract values, are significantly smaller than in case of the areas of life, which were clearly dominated by family (from the point of view of subjective importance) and where the last two areas were on average found much less significant. While most people assign the individual spheres of life the same significance, the values are ordered in a more diverse way. The structure of their hierarchy is not necessarily so distinct or deeply embedded in people's consciousness.

From the viewpoint of the overall average of individual values, truth placed first and was followed by individual freedom. More than a quarter of respondents have practically identically placed both values in the first place. Individual freedom, however, was placed in one of the last three places by more than a quarter of respondents (27.7 %) and truth only by 13.9 %. The analysis points out that individual freedom is more accented by people, who place themselves on the right side of the political spectrum, respondents with high standard of living, young people from the age of 15 to 19 and to a lesser degree from 20 to 29 and by students and men.

Humanity and mutual responsibility placed third and fourth, with just a small margin. People with a "high" (average 4.07) or "neither good nor bad" standard of living or "neither good nor bad" (4.39) found mutual responsibility higher than those with a low standard of living (4.94). People with university education (4.05) or high school education (4.12) also stressed mutual responsibility more frequently. The analysis has

³ Question: "How important do you find the following values? Put them in order from 1 to 8, while 1 is the most important. a) Solidarity with those in need, b) patriotism, c) humanity d) truth, e) justice of social differences, f) individual freedom, g) equality of people, h) mutual responsibility."

not revealed any other statistically significant socio-demographic differences in case of these two issues.

Equality of people, justice of social differences and solidarity with those in need placed from the fifth to the seventh place, only with slight differences. The above mentioned values had higher priority among respondents, who incline to the left side of the political spectrum. Justice of social differences and equality of people was placed relatively higher by people with low living standard.

Patriotism ended on the last, eighth place, with a slightly more significant margin. No significant socio-demographic differences were detected in case of this issue.

The following question was also related to value orientation. It surveyed what qualities should children acquire nowadays to assert themselves in life and to be useful for the society.⁴

Table 3: Nowadays, children should acquire...? (%)

	Definitely yes	Rathe r yes	Rathe r no	Definitel y no	Doesn' t know	+/-
Diligence	80	19	1	0	0	99/1
Sense of responsibility	80	18	1	0	1	98/1
Tolerance and respect to differences	43	47	6	1	3	90/7
Thriftiness and modesty	45	42	10	2	1	87/12
Unselfishness	51	41	6	1	1	92/7
Competitiveness	32	51	13	1	3	83/14
Ability to know one's way	50	41	6	1	2	91/7
Thoughtfulness	58	34	6	1	1	92/7
Open relationship to people	41	41	13	2	3	82/15
Ability to make contact and friendship with people	46	49	3	0	2	95/3
Effort to use one's abilities	69	28	2	0	1	97/2
Effort to come forward	36	50	10	1	3	86/11
Scrupulousness	50	39	8	1	2	89/9
Ability to carry one's point	31	51	14	1	3	82/15

Source: CVVM, Naše společnost survey, 04-10.

It is apparent from Table 3 that an absolute majority of people find all the indicated qualities as contributive. The survey revealed some (only very small) differences in the extent of the overall number of those, who agreed with the statement. Within the scale there also appeared differences in the intensity of agreement.

In case of diligence (agreement of 99 %) and sense of responsibility (98 %), the survey recorded almost unanimous public opinion. In case of both qualities, four fifths of the respondents chose the answer "definitely yes". Respondents practically unanimously marked the effort to use one's abilities (97 %) or the ability to make contact and friendship with people (95 %), even though the intensity of their agreement was weaker than in case of the previously mentioned qualities.

Qualities such as ability to carry one's point, competitiveness or effort to come forward had relatively smallest unanimous support. In case of these qualities, there were always more than 10 % of those, who did not agree. Among those who agreed the answer "rather yes" definitely outweighed the answer "definitely yes."

To arrange and sort out the overall results concerning number of completely different qualities we decided to use the factor analysis. The analysis extracted from the data three significant factors⁵, which divided the qualities that mostly contributed to their

⁴ Question: "According to you, which qualities should children nowadays acquire to assert themselves in the society and to be useful to the society?" (See Table 3)

⁵ The total degree of the exhausted variance in the given arrangement was 56.1 %. The level of the exhausted variance after rotation was 23.6 % in case of the first factor, 19.7 % in case of the second factor, and 12.8 % in case of the third one. We used the varimax method for the rotation.

creation into three groups, according to their objective nature. In each group appeared qualities that are similar, close or directly related to each other.

The first factor consists mainly of qualities dealing with interpersonal relations and human solidarity and reciprocity, represented in the survey by qualities such as unselfishness, thoughtfulness, tolerance, by openness towards other people, modesty and thriftiness, scrupulousness and to a lesser degree by the ability to make contacts and friendship or by the sense of responsibility.

Individualist qualities such as effort to come forward, ability to carry ones point, competitiveness, effort to use ones abilities, ability to know ones way and ability to make contacts asserted themselves in the second factor.

The third factor put together traditional, more or less conservative values, such as diligence, sense of responsibility and to a lesser degree also thriftiness and modesty, scrupulousness, thoughtfulness or effort to use one's abilities.

The analysis also pointed out that all the factors in question significantly correlate with the respondents' age. The first and the third factor put together qualities, which are more frequently stressed by older people, while the second factor is more stressed by the youngest generation. On the other hand, none of the factors demonstrated statistically significant correlation with political self—ranking on the political spectrum. Only the first factor slightly correlated with the subjective assessment of household standard. People with low living standard accented rather more frequently some of the qualities mostly represented by this factor.

The overall results of the survey, presenting only a brief and very incomplete probe into the whole area of values and life priorities, suggest that value orientation in the Czech society are not very differentiated or sharply delimited in the global view. As far as life priorities are concerned, orientation to personal level of life, namely to family, positively prevails. The placing of family outside of the top places of life priorities scale is often connected with a certain phase of respondents' life (particularly with adolescence, with gaining of independence or with a specific situation in life, which results in actual absence of their own family.) As far as the hierarchy of values and life priorities are concerned, age is the main socio-demographic feature that leads most frequently and most distinctly to statistically significant differences. We can presuppose that individual scale of values of the respondents can significantly change throughout their life. Individual orientation to public and political sphere is rather rare in the Czech population. A direct connection between one's own value orientation and political preferences or self-ranking on the political spectrum is generally weak and appears only in some partial questions. It is an obvious result (as well as evidence) of the general apathy and ideological uprootedness of the absolute majority of the Czech public. This fact is sustained not only by the results of many other public opinion polls, but also by an exceptionally low degree of membership in political parties in the Czech Republic and by rapidly decreasing participation in the elections.