

Occupational reputation as viewed by public opinion

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Occupational reputation as viewed by the general public is among interesting topics immediately related to labour issues and, indirectly, to other problem areas such as value orientation or modernization. At the end of last year, occupational reputation was analysed as part of one of the ongoing investigations of the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CVVM) of the Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic¹. In it, respondents assessed twenty-six selected professions at the scale of 1 to 99 based on their reputation.² Results in the form of average score and final scale of individual professions included in the research are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Occupational reputation (average score)

Profession	Average score
1. Doctor	89.5
2. Scientist	80.7
3. University teacher	78.5
4. Primary school teacher	71.3
5. Programmer	66.3
6. Judge	64.8
7. Designer	64.1
8. Mayor	60.1
9. Manager	59.4
10. Private farmer	59.1
11. Professional sportsman	56.1
12. Journalist	54.4
13. Minister	53.8
14. Accountant	53.5
15. Owner of a small shop	51.2
16. Joiner	50.8
17. Electrical appliances mechanic	50.2
18. Bank clerk	50.2
19. Turner	47.7
20. Policeman	47.6
21. Priest	46.1
22. Professional soldier	44.8
23. Secretary	43.7
24. Shop assistant	42.8
25. Deputy	39.9
26. Cleaning lady	29.4

Source: CVVM, Naše společnost 2004 (Our Society 2004) research, investigation No. 04-11

¹ The research was conducted between 8 and 15 November 2004 on a set of 1,027 of respondents, representing the population of the Czech Republic aged 15 years and more.

² A card was presented to all respondents with a list of 26 selected professions and the respondents assessed the professions on the basis of the following instruction: "There are some professions listed. Please select the profession that you value the most and assign 99 points to it. After that, select the profession that you value the least and assign number 01 to it. After that, proceed from top down and assign points ranging from 02 to 98 to the remaining professions based on your personal consideration."

First of all, results of the investigation relatively clearly proved the absolutely privileged position of doctors. They enjoy high prestige with an absolute majority of population. Doctors were placed at the very top of the entire ladder with the score of 99 by 41% of respondents; another 35% assigned the medical profession a mark between 90 and 98 points. From the point of view of reputation attributed to it, the medical profession surpassed, in a major way, other highly-valued and skill-demanding professions that, like doctors, also involve certain ethos, have a character of social service and are sometimes perceived more as missions than ways of earning one's living. To a certain degree, this undoubtedly holds for scientists or university teachers. They ranked closely second and third. Following, at some distance, apparently reflecting differences in qualification demands and related exclusivity of both preceding professions, the primary school teachers (similar to the preceding professions in its nature) ranked fourth on the scale. The leading position of doctors as measured by reputation ascribed to their profession by the general public is not a random phenomenon at all. All similar surveys organised by CVVM or its predecessor, the Institute for Public Opinion Research (*Institut pro výzkum veřejného mínění*) at the Czech Statistical Office since 1993 yielded similar results. One of reasons behind the fact that medical profession ranks higher with majority of the general public than, for example, the profession of a scientist,³ might be that people have developed a much stronger relationship to doctors based on the feeling of their own dependency on doctors. Practically everybody of us needs a doctor at least from time to time. But, on the other hand, scientific profession, in its way much more exclusive than the general practitioner profession, is rather distant for a majority of population in this comparison. In addition, the medical profession is perceived to involve very strong direct responsibility for human health and lives and this also might greatly reinforce the status of doctors in the eyes of the public.

Among relatively favourably assessed professions whose average score was high above the average of the scale were the programmer or designer. These professions require great special expert skills and bring along, in addition to highly above-average income for the most part, the possibility of independent creative decision-making. Previous investigations (not entirely comparable to the last CVVM's research because they contained a slightly modified list of professions but contained both stated professions as well as most of other items) imply that the reputation of both professions had gradually grown over the past ten years and that they have moved up a lot on the professional ladder.

Judges obtained similar evaluation to the two preceding professions. The profession has both high expert and moral demands. Along with financial remuneration, it enjoys a formal position and power in society. Together with the office of mayors (assessed just a bit lower on average), the judicial profession became the most prestigious profession representing state authority and its apparatus in the research of professional reputation. Compared to that, the minister ranked, both based on its position among other professions (the 13th position out of 26) as well as on the score within the scale used (53.8 points) only at a mediocre place and the position of the deputy was valued with such contempt that only the profession of the cleaning lady had a lower reputation. This assessment obviously very clearly reflects the prevailing negative attitude towards "high" politics and, especially, permanently low trust in legislative bodies. But the policemen or professional soldiers ended in the second half based on the position and the scale used.

In addition to the mentioned ones, the professions of manager and, a bit surprisingly, of private farmers joined the group of relatively more prestigious professions for Czech

³ In the investigation, 67% of respondents placed doctors above scientists with regard to evaluation of their reputation, 4% evaluated both professions as identical and only 29% of respondents awarded higher reputation to the scientists than to doctors.

population. In addition to professional sportsmen (whose reputation gradually rose like that of programmers or designers), journalists, ministers and accountants reached well above 50 points, even if not very high. On average, respondents placed owners of small shops, joiners, electrical appliances mechanics and bank clerks to the half of the scale, with negligible differences.

Turners who, along with joiners or electrical appliances mechanics represented skilled blue-collar professions, together with policemen, ended just below the half. Based on responses from respondents, profession of a priest ended only below them. Relatively low prestige of clergy is clearly the result of high secularisation and a not very good reputation of especially the Roman-catholic church among a section of the Czech public.⁴ Evaluation of priests by Catholic believers was much better and reached 63.4 points on average. Secretaries and shop assistants ended below professional soldiers but still above deputies.

In order to sort out final results from a battery of this size, we have made an attempt to examine the data using factor analysis. The analysis disclosed six significant factors⁵. They were formed by items relating either to professions similar in nature or items where individual professions were linked by a certain characteristic or external circumstance representing a kind of common denominator.

Behind the first factor there is a large group of ordinary professions for which a more or less prevailing manual and routine character of the work performed. Joiners, turners, shop assistants, cleaning ladies, electrical appliances mechanics or private farmers participated in this factor very strongly. Also, professions such as owners of a small shop, accountants or secretaries were also strongly represented in this factor. As more detailed analysis showed, there was a slight correlation between the factor and age and political orientation of respondents. Young people and people in the right part of political spectrum value manual and routine professions rather less, for the most part.

The second factor comprised in particular jobs representing a kind of a modern ideal of people's professional life, especially for younger part of today's Czech population. Programmers, managers or professional sportsmen and, to a lesser degree, accountants, designers or secretaries are behind this factor. The factor shows relatively significant correlation with age; a part of younger people ranks these professions higher than other citizens.

The third factor involved mainly mental-work professions with high qualification demands, while the highest esteem was attributed to university and primary school teachers, doctors, scientists and, to a lesser degree, to designers or programmers. The third factor correlated, quite understandably, with the highest education of the respondent. People with higher education attributed relatively higher reputation to professions with high qualification

⁴ Traditionally, general trust in churches is low in the Czech Republic. In September 2004, research of CVVM showed that only 31% of respondents stated that they trusted churches. This was much less than how many people trusted churches in Poland (56%), in Slovakia (53%) or in Hungary (48%) based on comparable investigation from the same period of time conducted as part of co-operation of CEORG (see the press release of CVVM titled "Trust in certain institutions in our society and to people around us" of 29 October 2004). The relation of the public and the Roman-catholic church was, in the long run, burdened with extensive property restitutions, in addition to other things. Majority of residents did not agree with them at all or only in limited extent.

⁵ Total rate of used variance reached 59.2%. The first factor in rotated solution received 17.0% of variance used, the second factor received 10.0%, the third received 9.7%, the fourth received 9.1%, the fifth received 6.8% and the sixth received 6.5%. The varimax method was used for the rotation.

demands.⁶ From the point of age, differences become apparent between adults and the youngest group of respondents between 15 and 19 years of age whose priorities and criteria in assessing the reputation of professions differ somewhat from other age groups. Elderly respondents bring professions with high qualification demands forming the factor to front more prominently than the youngest respondents' group.⁷

The fourth factor combines professions relating to state authority and its apparatus. Perception of the reputation of policemen, professional soldiers, ministers as well as deputies reflected in a major manner in the factor. The reputation of the office of a mayor has been relatively weaker, although still its contribution in the formation of this factor was not negligible. Further analysis demonstrated that this factor shows rather strong correlation with subjective evaluation of the current political situation and trust in the government, the Chamber of Deputies or local authority. People who have more favourable opinion of the political situation and political institutions appreciate more professions combined under this factor.

Formation of the fifth factor was influenced by attitude towards professions representing, in their own way, even if quite differently in individual instances, political, social and economic transformation of the 1990s and defence of the *status quo* created by it. From among professions included in the research, journalists, bank clerks and owners of small shops belong here. To a lesser degree, also attitudes to managers or university teachers reflected into this factor. The assumption that the fifth factor apparently reflected the impact of the attitude towards transformation is evidenced by the fact that it correlates, again relatively distinctly, with political orientation and political preferences of respondents. The professions in question enjoy relatively higher reputation among ODS supporters or, more precisely, among people professing the right part of the political spectrum. To the contrary those who prefer KSCM place them somewhat lower.

The contours of the influence of the relationship towards authorities is very clear behind the last, sixth factor, in which priests, mayors, ministers and deputies were heavily represented. Mainly people of conservative orientation, chiefly including the Catholics and, consequently, KDU-ČSL supporters in our context, treat authorities with relatively higher trust. Therefore, they attribute slightly higher prestige to professions that contain such element of authority. Analysis of the sixth factor confirmed such assumption completely. In addition to major differences in terms of various religions and differences caused by party preferences, differences based on age appeared for the sixth factor. These, however, apparently follow from the fact that older people are more frequently religious than younger people. A statistically relevant difference appeared also for gender differences for the sixth factor. This difference is also partly caused by the fact that there are more religious women than religious men. The difference based on gender, however, also appeared if only Roman-Catholics were taken into account as respondents. This may imply that, in general, women tend to treat authorities with slightly higher respect than men.

Based on results of the investigation and analyses made, we may say that perception of occupational reputation presents a relatively complex, internally differentiated social phenomenon, which reflect impacts of age, gender, education, life attitudes, value scale,

⁶ Education-based differences were not much pronounced for individual professions but, in total, the difference was apparent. If we take, for example, the aggregate score of the prestige of doctors, scientists, university teachers, primary school teachers and designers, their average in the entire set was 383.8 and for people with primary-school education, it reached 369.7, for people with vocational-school education 383.3, for secondary school graduates with *maturita* 390.6 and, for university-educated people 398.7.

⁷ The aggregate score of the prestige of five professions most dominant in the formation of the factor – doctors, scientists, university teacher, primary-school teacher, and designer – averaged at 365.9 in the group of people of 15 to 19 years and for all other age groups, it oscillated in a narrow range between 383.6 and 388.3.

fashion trends and even political orientation and opinions in respect of current social development reflect in various parts and in various degrees. Financial evaluation of professions and power status related to the performance of a position or to a position in control hierarchy are not unimportant but only partial criteria of what order and what status people attribute to individual professions. On the scale of professions under review, managers, ministers or even deputies, for example, show this very clearly. Characteristics such as social benefit, demands and responsibility of certain professions play important roles in assessing occupational reputation. In certain basic contours, the view of the occupational status does not change in time very much. This applies, chiefly, for the top of the scale (doctors, scientists, teachers) and most manual or routine professions. But for a number of professions, such as programmers or professional sportsmen, the impact of generation shift is clear. This is likely to continue into the future as well. The status of professions related to politics or execution of state power is, in time, subject to changes in the current view of social and political development and in trust in institutions that these professions represent. To a certain degree, the same holds, apparently, for the occupational status of clergy or bank clerks. To a certain degree, the reputation reflects trust in the church or financial institutions, respectively.