

Press Release

Czech citizens' opinions on marriage and the family – February 2017

- ⊕ An absolute majority of Czechs agree with the statement that divorce is acceptable if the family has broken down, with 75% of respondents expressing agreement with this statement. More than one-half of citizens (56%) agree that it is acceptable for people to live together even if they are not planning to wed.
- ⊕ The strongest disagreement is with the statements that it is not right for partners to live together in the same home if they are not married (71%) and that a bad marriage is better than no marriage (72%).

Prepared by:
Jarmila Pilecká
Public Opinion Research Centre, Institute of Sociology CAS
Tel.: 210 310 591



In the Czech Society survey conducted in February 2017 the Public Opinion Research Centre included a set of questions on family. The questions asked respondents to react to a selected set of statements focusing on the cohabitation of partners and on marriage, divorce, and parenthood in general.

The absolute majority of the Czech public agree with the statement that divorce is acceptable if a family is broken ('If a family doesn't function divorce is an acceptable option'), with 75% of respondents agreeing with this statement, less than one-tenth disagreeing (8%), and 15% taking a neutral view of this. More than one-half of citizens (56%) agree that it is acceptable for people to live together even if they are not planning to wed. Just under one-half (49%) of respondents agree with the view that one parent can raise a child just as well as two parents together, while more than one-quarter (28%) of respondents disagree with this view, and almost as many Czechs (48%) also do not consider it necessary for a cohabiting couple with children to be married.

Agreement with the following statements was weaker than with the statements above. Two-fifths of respondents consider the main advantage of marriage to be financial security (41%), while 28% of respondents disagree with this view. A similar divergence of opinion is observed on the question of whether the children of divorced parents are more likely to divorce – 37% of respondents agree with this statement compared to one-quarter (24%) who do not.

In the case of the following statements, there is more disagreement than agreement. Two-fifths (40%) of respondents do not think that people have to be married if they want to have children. The spectrum of opinion is similarly split over the statement 'The main purpose of marriage is to have children' (41% disagree compared to 31% who agree). Slightly more people disagree with the statement that married men and married women are generally happier than single people (30% disagree compared to 27% who agree). A significantly larger share of respondents disagree with the statement that when raising children it is important for parents to be married (49%). Approximately one-fifth (21%) of the Czech public is of the opinion that divorced men have worse lives than divorced women, while more than two-fifths of respondents (42%) disagree with this opinion.

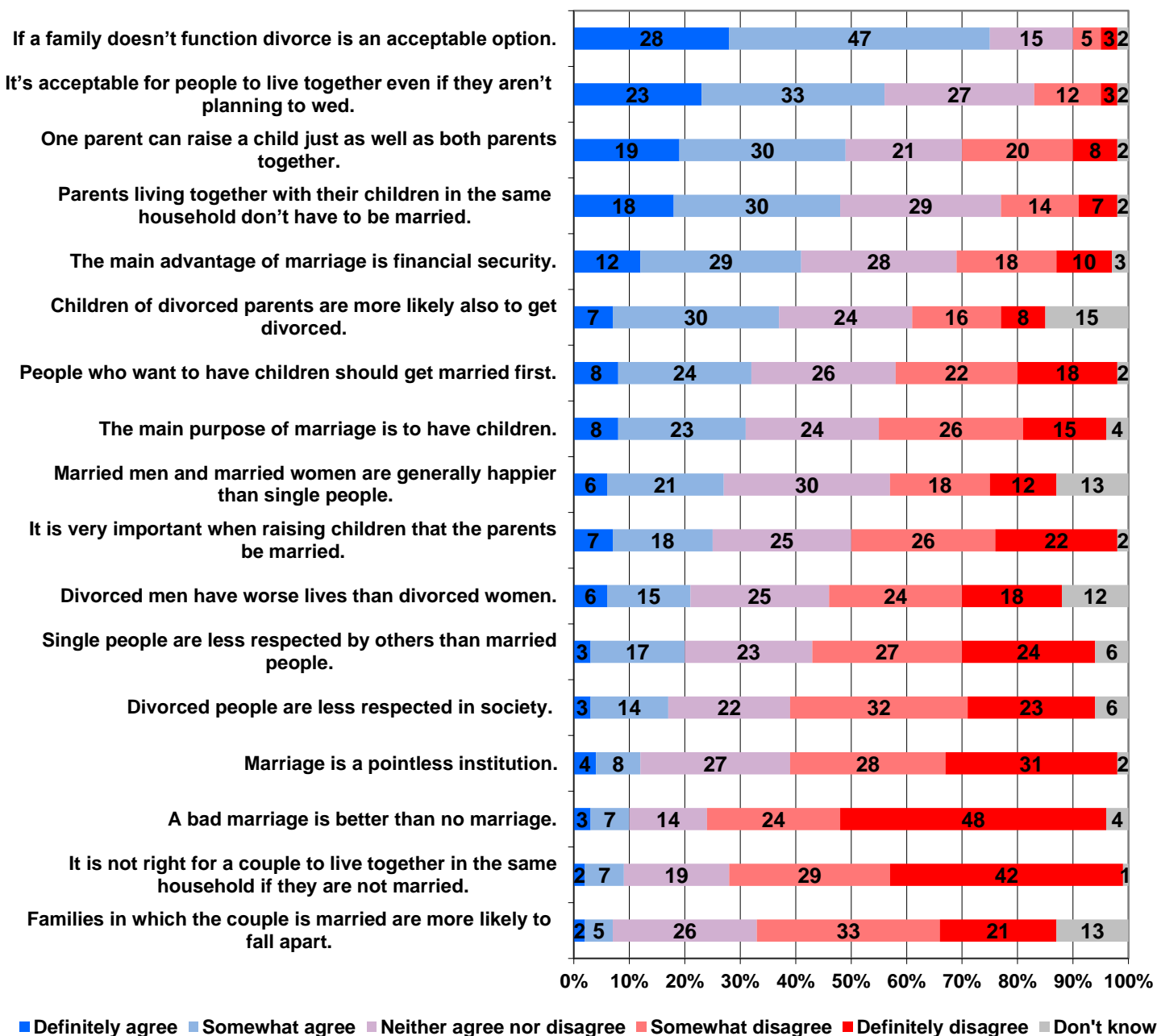
An absolute majority (51%) of the Czech public disagree that single people are less respected by others than married people are. The same is true with respect to divorced people, as 55% of respondents do not consider divorce to be grounds for society to respect a person less. A similar number of respondents (54%) disagree with the opinion that families are more likely to fall apart when partners are married.

A significant majority of the Czech public reject the view that marriage is a pointless institution (59% oppose this view). The biggest disagreement is with the statements that it is not right for a couple to live together if they are not married (71% disagreed) and that a bad marriage is better than no marriage (72%).

The Czech public in general have an accepting attitude towards partners living together without being married. The institution of marriage is also not considered necessary in order for a couple to have children or start a family, but this does not mean that Czechs consider marriage meaningless or pointless. The Czech public are also relatively

accepting of divorce, especially in the case of marriages that don't work, and have a largely tolerant view of divorced people. However, Czechs consider it more likely for children of divorced parents to end up being divorced themselves.

Figure 1. Agreement/disagreement with statements about partnership and parenthood (%)¹



Note: The statements in the graph are ordered from the highest to the lowest scores for responses expressing agreement with the given statement.

Source: Public Opinion Research Centre, Institute of Sociology CAS (CVVM SOÚ AV ČR, v.v.i.), Czech Society (Naše společnost) 6–19 February 2017, 1023 respondents aged 15 and over, face-to-face interviews.

¹ The question read: 'To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements?' See Figure 1 for the wording of the statements.

Respondents' attitudes differ primarily according to age, marital status, and sex. Other important indicators are where respondents rank on the political spectrum, their standard of living, and religion. Conversely, respondents do not differ according to education levels.

Significant differences between men and women are primarily observed in people's opinions on whether divorced men have better lives than divorced women, with women disagreeing more strongly with this view than men. Slightly more women agree that the main advantage of marriage is financial security, and significantly more women than men also believe that one parent can raise a child just as well as both parents together.

Age differences between respondents were another important factor behind different attitudes towards the selected statements. People aged 60+ differ significantly in their opinions from the younger generations. Approximately one-half as many more people in this age group than in the others agree that the children of divorced parents are more likely to get divorced themselves. People aged 60+ more often agree that the main purpose of marriage is to have children. With increasing age, the stress placed on parents being married and the importance of marriage for raising children also increases. In the 60+ age group especially there is little support for parents living together with their children without getting married and instead it is believed that people who want to have children should get married first. They also do not consider one parent raising a child to be just as good as two parents doing so together. People in this age group also significantly more often do not believe it is right for people to live together if they are not planning to wed. People in this age group are thus of the opposite opinion to that primarily held by people up to the age of 30.

Married men and married women, unlike divorced people, do not think that one parent can raise a child just as well as both parents together. The main significant difference observed between single and married people was on statements that in some way had to do with marriage, its role in partners' plans and in raising children. It is not surprising that married people more strongly defend the institution of marriage and its importance than single or divorced people do. Significant differences can also be observed in opinions on whether the children of divorced parents are more likely to get divorced, with more single people than married people agreeing with this statement.

Differences were also observed between respondents depending on whether they indicated they belonged to a religious or faith or whether they described themselves as atheists. Religious people are more often opposed to people cohabiting or raising children without getting married. This tendency is especially apparent in the case of the statements 'People who want to have children should get married first', 'It's acceptable for people to live together even if they aren't planning to wed', 'Parents living together with their children in the same household don't have to be married', and 'It is not right for a couple to live together in the same household if they are not married'.

People who rank themselves more on the left side of the political spectrum are more inclined than people on the right side of the spectrum to agree that the main purpose of marriage is to have children and more often believe that people who are divorced are less respected in society. By contrast, people towards the right side of the spectrum are more tolerant of people living together without getting married.

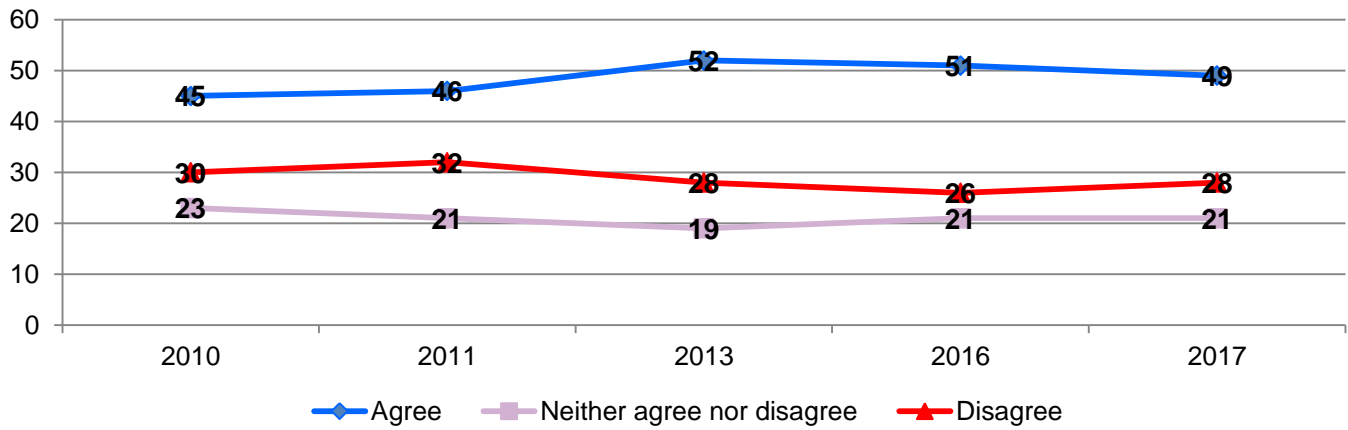
Whether respondents grew up in a two-parent family is also observed to have an effect on agreement or disagreement with some statements. Respondents differ by this characteristic mainly on the opinion of whether one parent can raise a child just as well as both parents together. Logically, people who grew up in lone-parent families agree more with this statement than people who grew up in two-parent families. People in two-parent families are also more often of the opinion that when raising children it is important that the parents be married.

The number of children is not a significant differentiating factor, but in some cases it is an influential variable. People with one or more children significantly more often disagree that the main purpose of marriage is to have children. Childless people more often agree that parents living together with their children in the same household don't have to be married. Respondents with 4 to 5 children consider being married to be important for raising children more often than other respondents do.

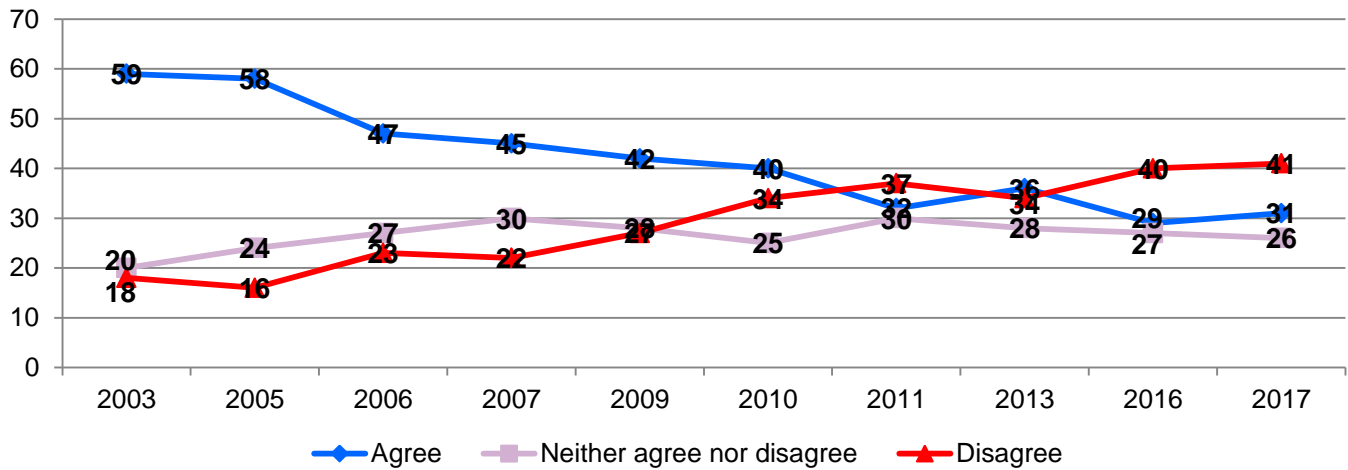
Differences in opinion according to living standard are mainly apparent in opinions on the statement that the main purpose of marriage is to have children – this view is more often favoured by people with a lower standard of living. They also significantly more often believe that divorced people are less respected in society.

Figures 3a to 3p. Agreement or disagreement with statements about partnership and parenthood – a time comparison

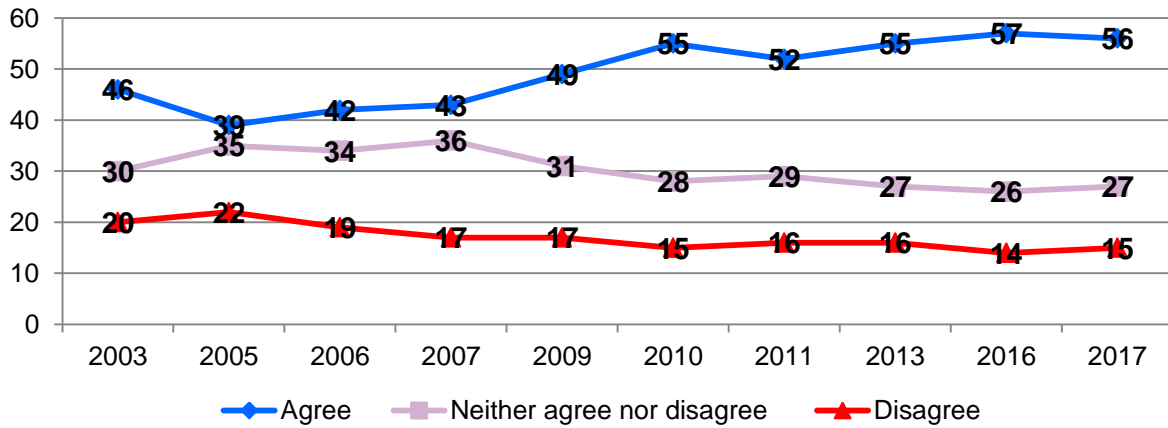
One parent can raise a child just as well as both parents together.



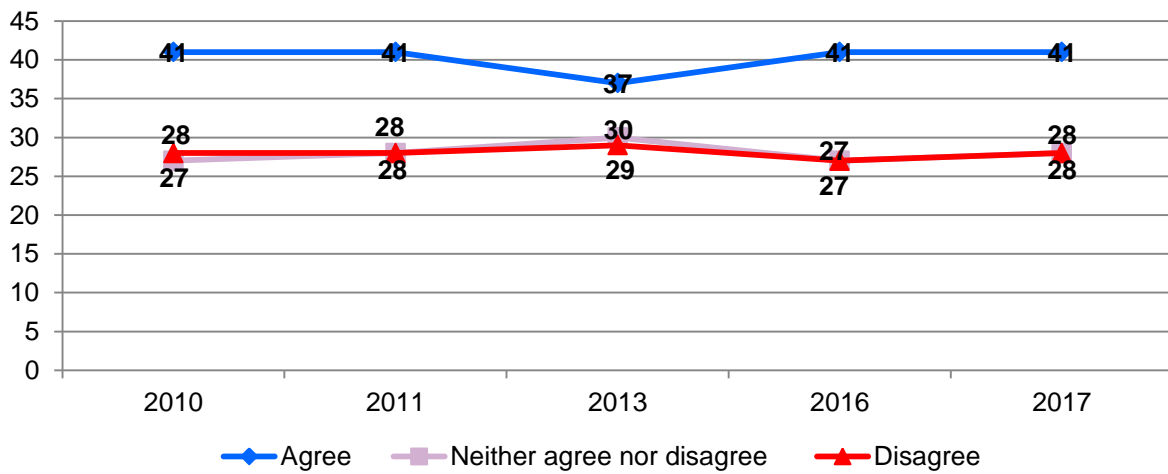
People who want to have children should get married first.



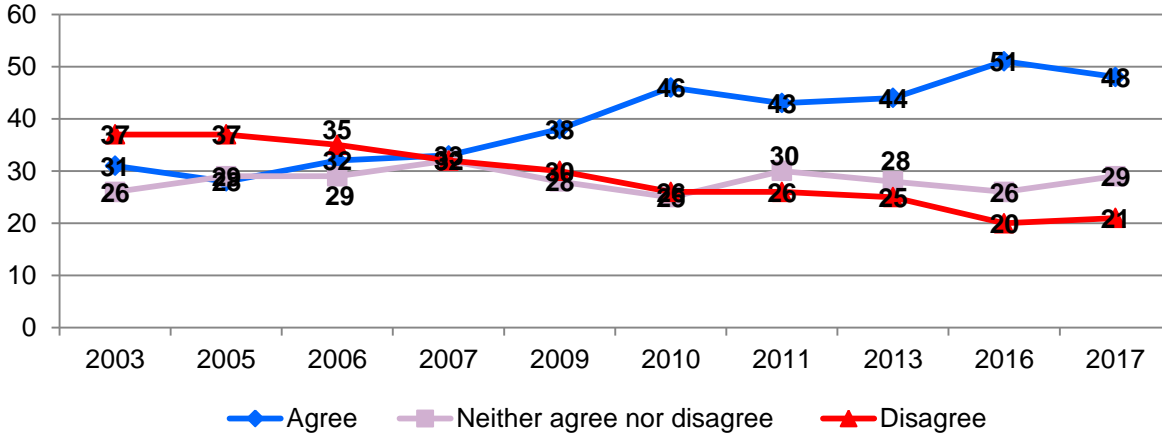
It's acceptable for people to live together even if they aren't planning to wed.



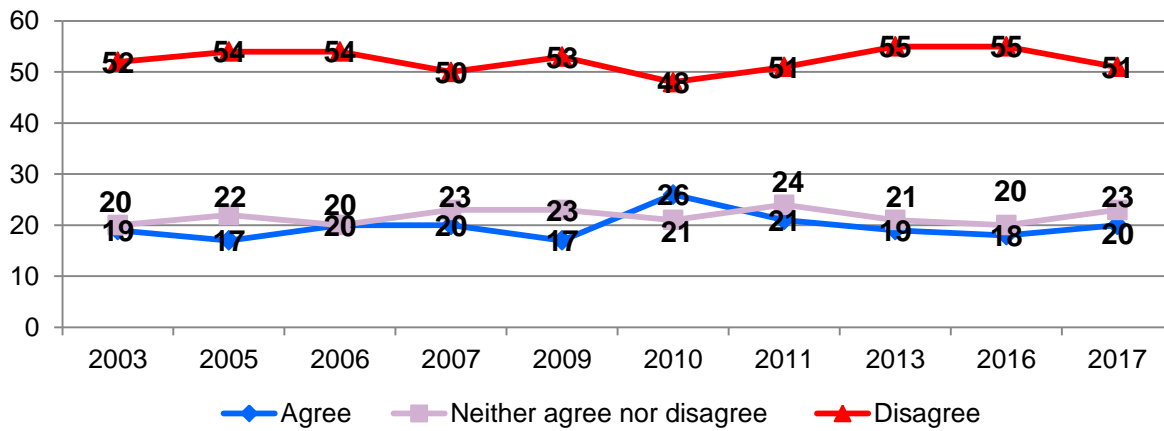
The main advantage of marriage is financial security.



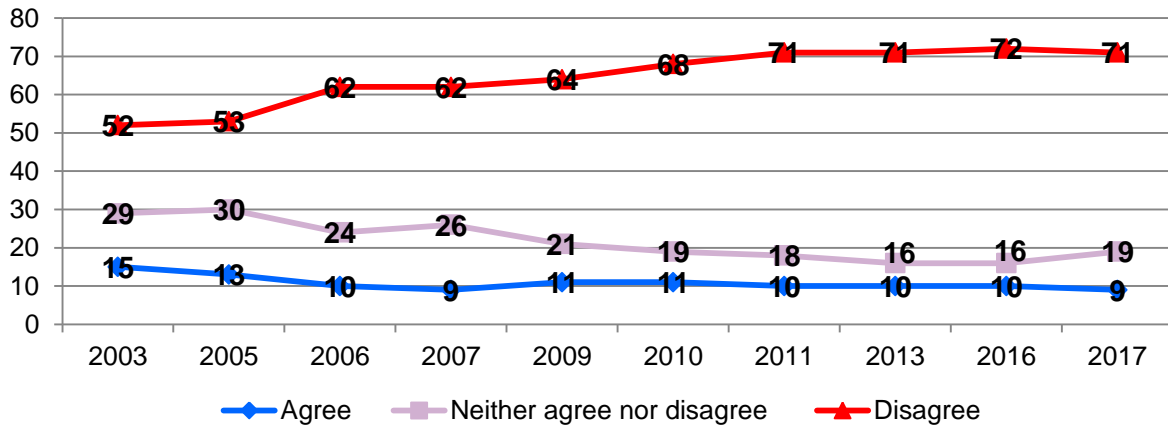
Parents living together with their children in the same household don't have to be married.



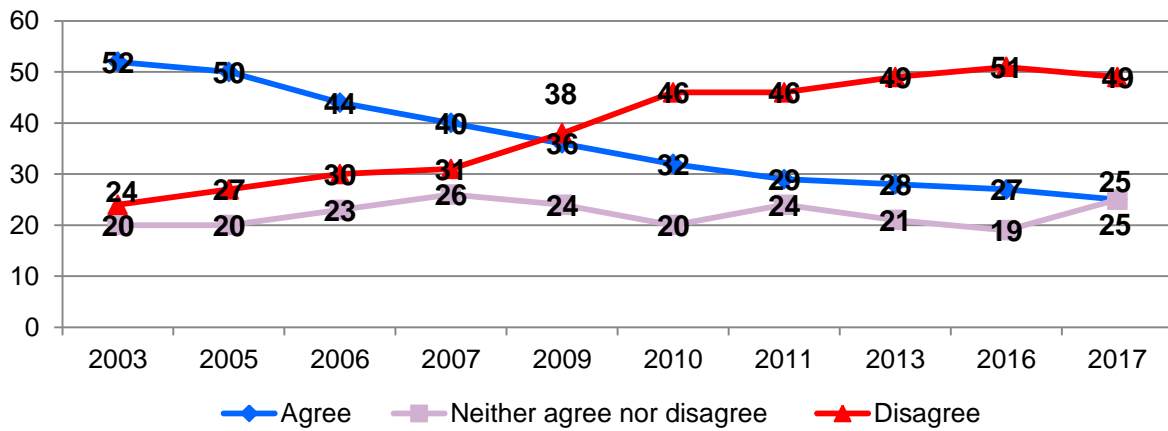
Single people are less respected by others than married people.



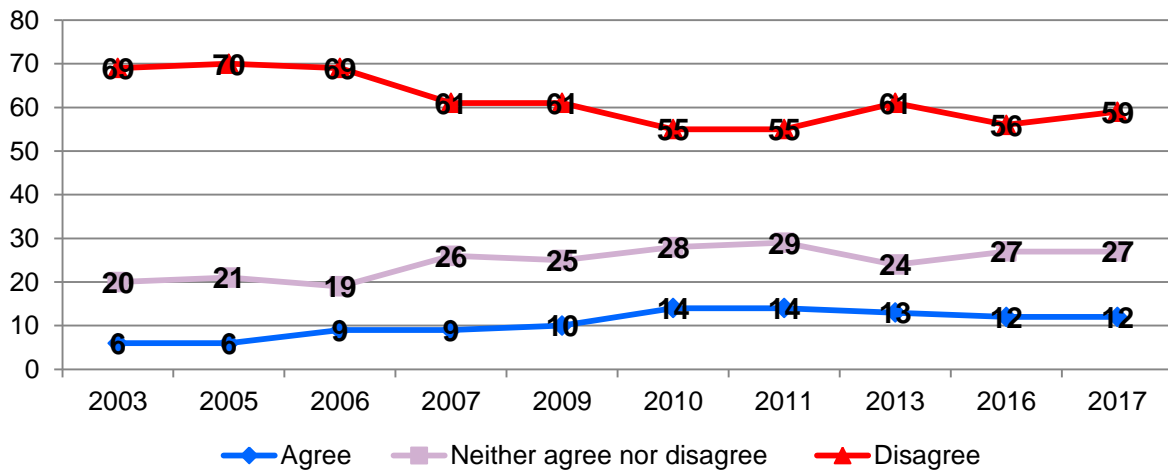
It is not right for a couple to live together in the same household if they are not married.



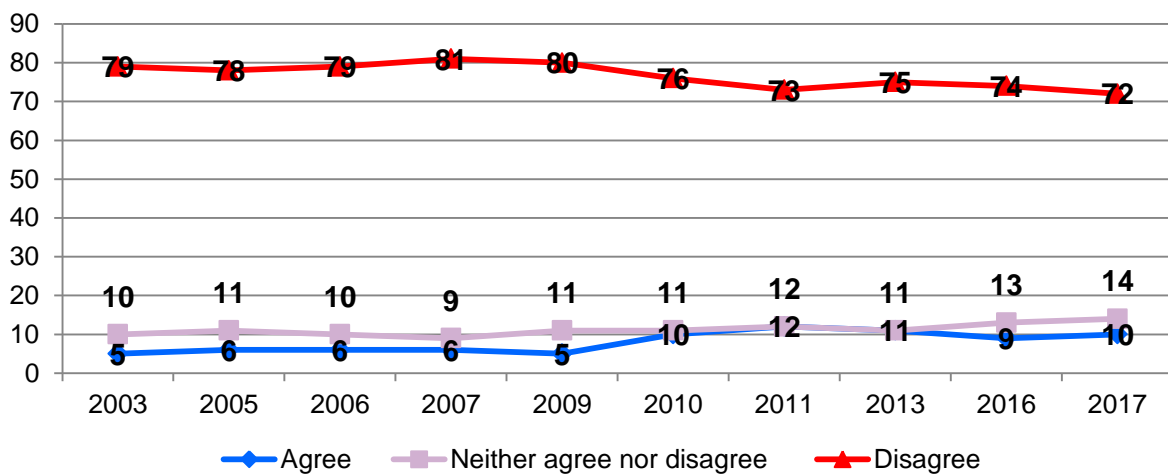
It is very important when raising children that the parents be married.



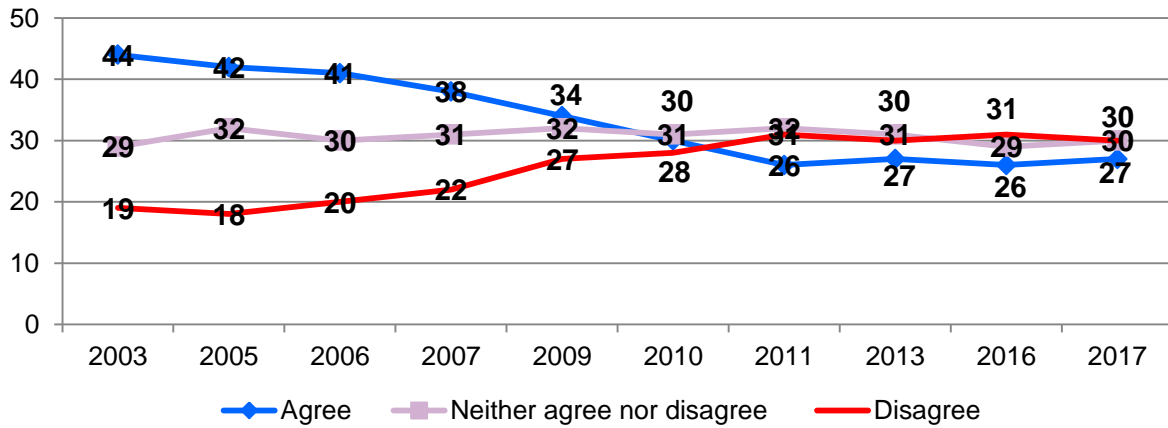
Marriage is a pointless institution.



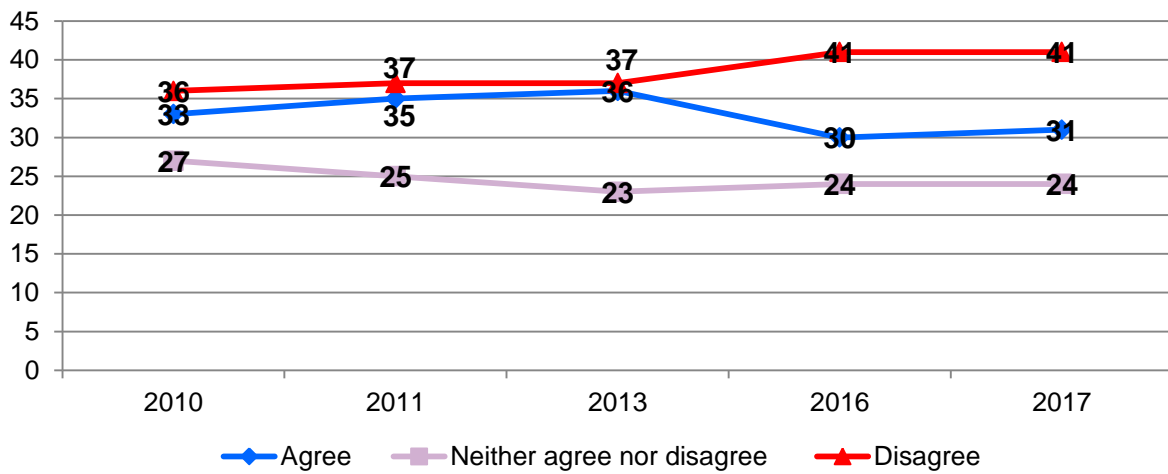
A bad marriage is better than no marriage.



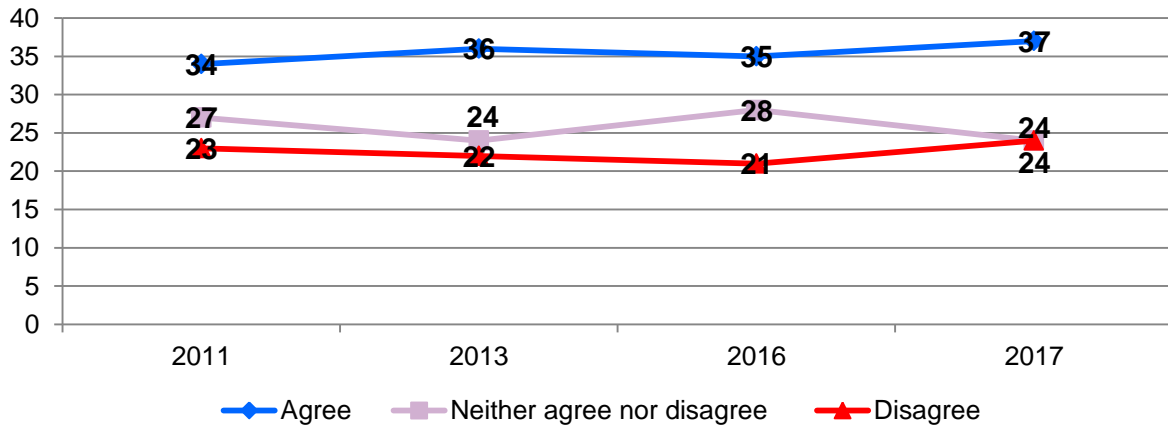
Married men and women are generally happier than single people.



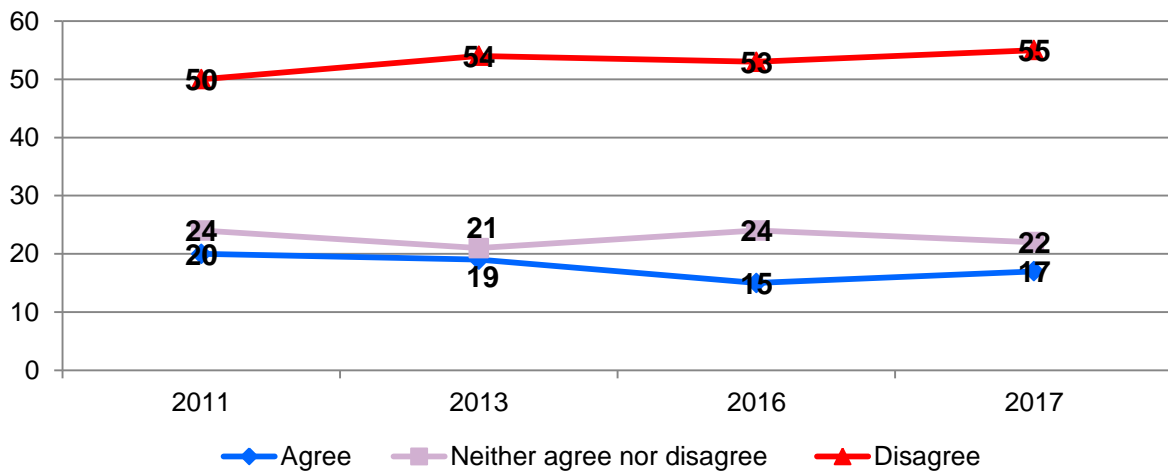
The main purpose of marriage is to have children.



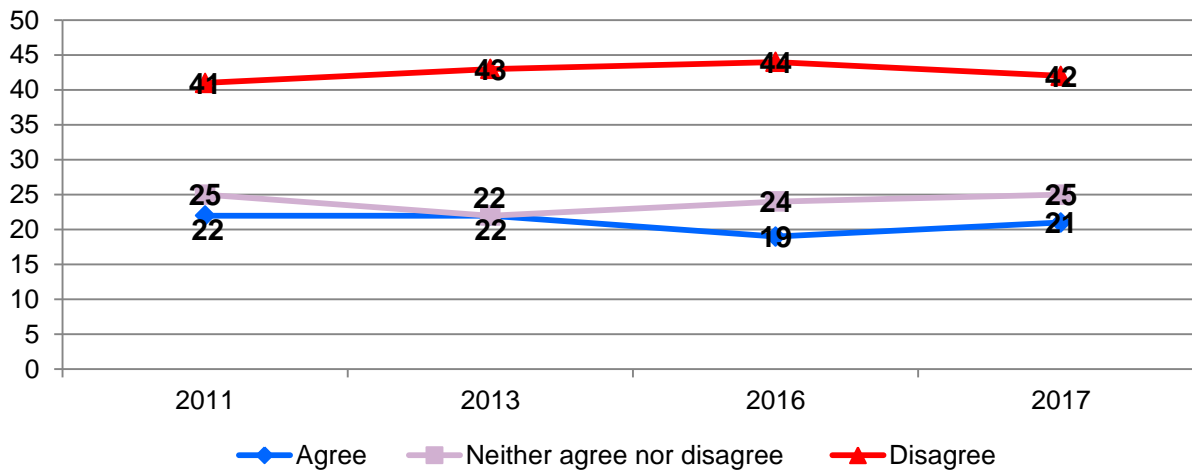
Children of divorced parents are more likely to get divorced.



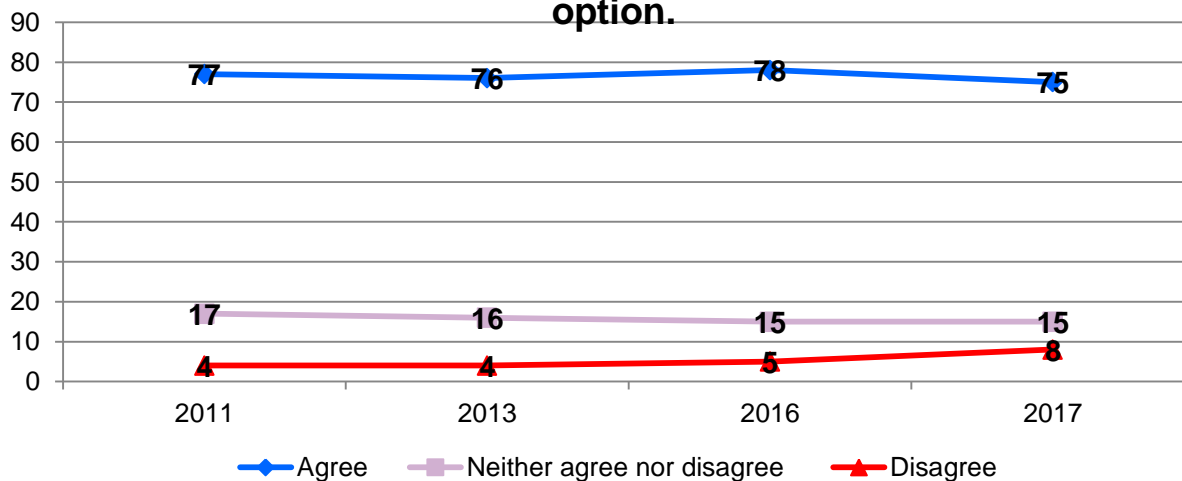
Divorced people are less respected in society.



Divorced men have worse lives than divorced women.



If a family doesn't function divorce is an acceptable option.



Source: Public Opinion Research Centre, Institute of Sociology CAS (CVVM SOÚ AV ČR, v.v.i.), Czech Society (Naše společnost).

Compared to the last survey there were no significant changes in the distribution of opinions among the Czech public. Since 2013 Czech citizens' views on marriage and family have changed considerably when it comes to some statements. There was an increase since 2013 in the share of people who agree with the statement that parents living together with their children in the same household don't have to be married (+4 percentage points) and that the main advantage of marriage is financial security (+4 percentage points). Conversely, there was an increase in the share of people who disagree with the statement that people who want to have children should get married first (+7 percentage points). There has also been a decrease since 2013 in the share of agreement with the opinion that the main purpose of marriage is to have children (-5 percentage points).

When we consider a longer time comparison by focusing on the questions that have been regularly included in the surveys since 2003, we find that Czech society is now more tolerant of couples living together without getting married, even if they are unmarried parents raising children together. Between 2003 and 2017 there was an increase in the share of people who agreed with the statements that parents living together with their children in the same household don't have to be married (+17 percentage points), that it's acceptable for people to live together even if they aren't

planning to wed (+10 percentage points), and that marriage is a pointless institution (+6 percentage points). There was an increase in disagreement with the statements that it is very important that parents raising children be married (+25 percentage points), that people who want to have children get married first (+23 percentage points), and that it's not right for a couple to live together in the same household if they aren't married (+19 percentage points), and that married men and women are generally happier (+11 percentage points). There has also been an increase in the share of people who disagree with the statement that the main purpose of marriage is to have children (+5 percentage points) since 2010, when this item was included in the survey for the first time.

Technical parameters of the survey

Survey:	<i>Czech Society, v17-02</i>
Conducted by:	<i>Public Opinion Research Centre, Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences</i>
Project:	<i>Czech Society – Continuous Public Opinion Research Project of the Public Opinion Research Centre, Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Science.</i>
Field survey dates:	<i>6–19 February 2017</i>
Sampling method:	<i>Quota sampling</i>
Quotas:	<i>Region (NUTS 3 Regions), size of place of residence, sex, age, education</i>
Data source for quota sampling:	<i>Czech Statistical Office</i>
Representativeness:	<i>Population of the Czech Republic over the age of 15</i>
Number of respondents:	<i>1023</i>
Number of interviewers:	<i>255</i>
Data collection method:	<i>Face-to-face interviews conducted by interviewers with respondents - combined CAPI and PAPI questioning</i>
Research instrument:	<i>Standardised questionnaire</i>
Questions:	<i>OV.61</i>
Report code:	<i>ov170320</i>
Published:	<i>20 March 2017</i>
Written by:	<i>Jarmila Pilecká</i>

Glossary of terms:

A quota sample replicates the structure of the basic population of the study (in this case the population of the Czech Republic over the age of 15) by setting quotas for different parameters. In other words, a quota sample is based on the same proportion of persons with the selected characteristics. We used data from the Czech Statistical Office to create the quotas. In our surveys quotas are set for sex, age, education, region, and community size. The sample is thus selected so that the percentage of men and women in the sample corresponds to the share of men and women in each region of the CR. Similarly the sample reflects the corresponding shares of the population in individual regions in the CR, citizens in different age groups, people with different levels of education, and people in different sizes of communities.

A representative sample is a sample from the total population whose characteristics can be validly inferred as applicable to the population overall. Here this means that respondents were selected with a view to generalising the collected data as applicable to the population of the Czech Republic over the age of 15.

The Public Opinion Research Centre (CVVM) is a research department of the Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences. Its history dates back to 1946, when the Czechoslovak Institute for Public Opinion Research began operating as part of the Ministry of Information. The current CVVM emerged in 2001 when its predecessor (IVVM) was transferred from the Czech Statistical Office to the Institute of Sociology. Its incorporation within an academic institution provides a guarantee of high professional standards and quality, and as part of an academic environment the CVVM is required to fulfil criteria that ensure it meets the highest professional standards. The CVVM's work is centred on the Czech Society research project, in the frame of which it examines public opinion by conducting ten surveys annually on a representative sample of the population over the age of 15, with approximately 1000 respondents participating in each survey. The questionnaire's omnibus format makes it possible to cover a wide array of topics. Political, economic, and other generally social topics are regularly added to the survey. The surveys include both repeat questions, whereby it is possible to observe phenomena over time, and new topics that reflect current events. The long-term and continuous nature of this project focused on surveying public opinion is unique in the Czech Republic.
