

Press Release

Public opinion on abortion and euthanasia – May 2017

- ⊙ Approximately seven in ten Czechs (71%) believe that it is the right of a woman herself to decide whether to terminate her pregnancy.
- ⊙ Only 2% of citizens favour a total ban on abortion.
- ⊙ The Czech public's opinions on abortion have been basically stable since 2010.
- ⊙ According to the survey, just under two-thirds of the Czech public (63%) agree that euthanasia should be made legal.
- ⊙ The total share of the public who agree with making euthanasia legal has not significantly changed since last year and has remained roughly stable since 2011.

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As part of the regular Czech Society survey in May 2017 the Public Opinion Research Centre asked the Czech public about the opinions on questions that in a moral perspective are considered controversial. Respondents were asked their opinions specifically about the subjects of abortion¹ and euthanasia.²

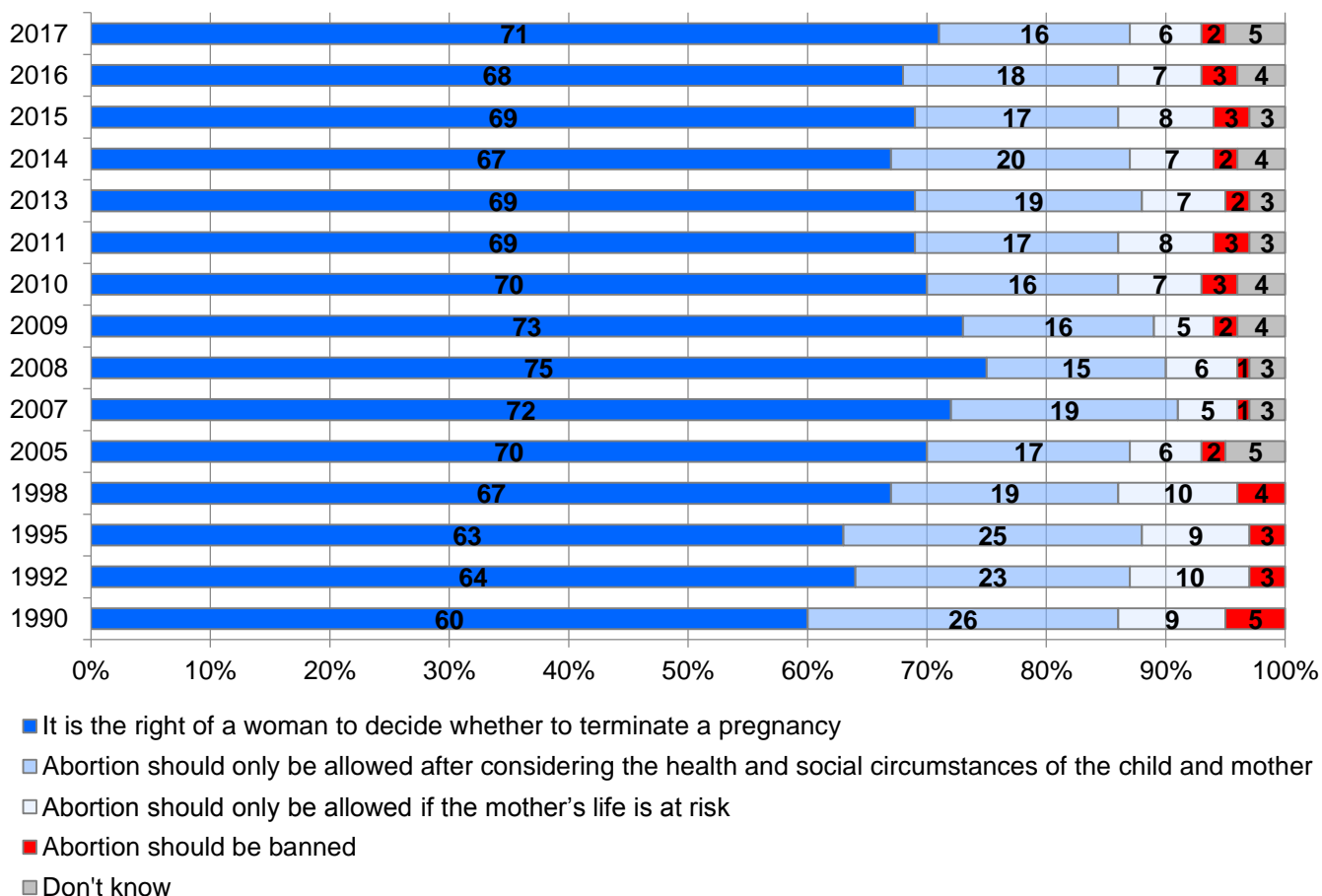
Figure 1 shows that approximately seven in ten Czech citizens (71%) believe that it is the right of a woman herself to decide whether to terminate her pregnancy. Approximately one-sixth of Czechs (16%) believe that abortion should be allowed only when the health and social circumstances of the child and woman are taken into account. That abortion should only be allowed if the pregnant woman's life is at risk is the view of 6% of the population, and just 2% of Czechs feel that there should be a total ban on abortion. Another 5% of respondents had no clear opinion on this matter and therefore answered 'don't know'.

A question on the opinions of the public on abortion was first included in the continuous survey in 1990. It was already apparent then that the public had relatively liberal views on this issue. Figure 1 shows that the share of people who believe that it is the right of a woman to decide whether to terminate her pregnancy has increased since that time. The largest share of respondents recorded in support of a woman's right to decide about her pregnancy was in 2008, and since 2010 the Czech public's opinions on this issue have been basically stable.

¹ The question read: 'Tell us, which of the following opinions is closest to your own: A woman has the right to decide whether to terminate her pregnancy; abortion should be allowed only after considering the health and social circumstances of the child and the mother; abortion should only be allowed if the pregnant woman's life is at risk; abortion should be banned?'

² The question read: 'Do you agree or disagree that Czech law should allow terminally ill persons to end their life (i.e. euthanasia)?' The response options were: 'Strongly agree – somewhat agree – somewhat disagree – strongly disagree.'

Figure 1. Opinions on abortion – a time comparison



Note: Up to the year 1998 the data were processed without the response 'don't know'.

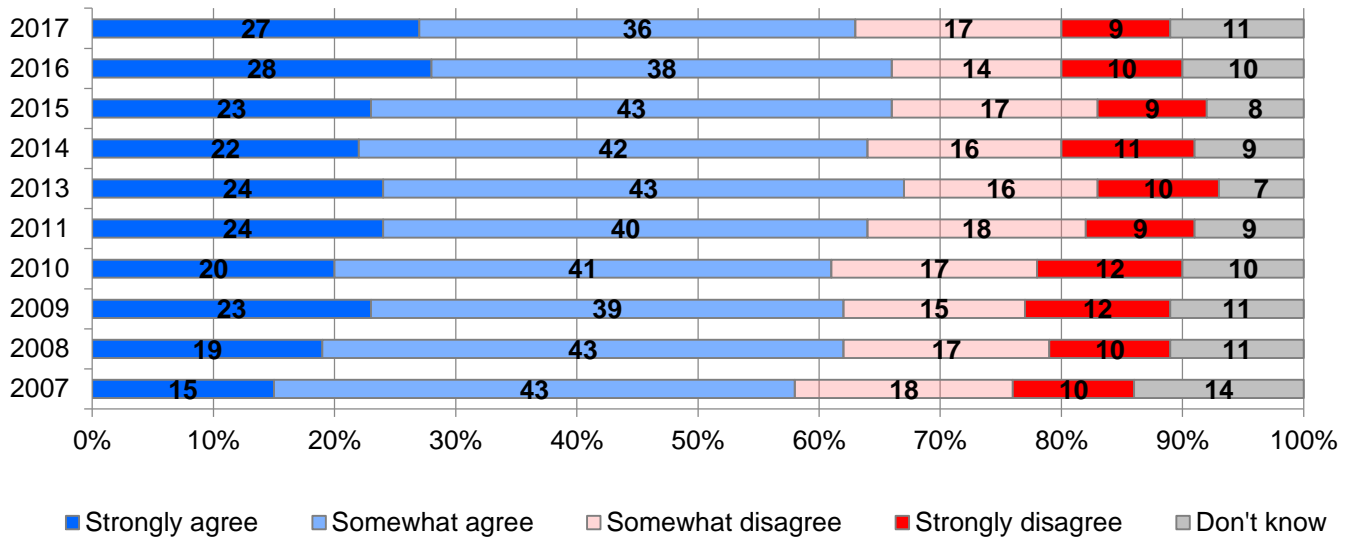
Source: Public Opinion Research Centre, Institute of Sociology CAS (CVVM SOÚ AV ČR, v.v.i.), Czech Society (Naše společnost) 8–18 May 2017, 1019 respondents aged 15 and over, face-to-face interviews.

The opinion that a woman herself has the right to decide whether to terminate her pregnancy is most often recorded among women (75% of women agree), people who claim no church or religious affiliation (78%), and respondents who ranks themselves on the right side of the political spectrum (80%). The opinion that there should be some restrictions or a total ban on abortion is more common among men (67% agree that a woman has the right to decide whether to terminate her pregnancy), people over the age of 60 (62%), and respondents who say they are Roman Catholics (62%).

All the respondents were also asked in the survey whether they agree or disagree that Czech law should allow terminally ill persons to end their life (i.e. euthanasia). According to the survey, just under two-thirds of the Czech public agree that euthanasia should be made legal (63%), with more than one-quarter (27%) claiming they 'definitely agree' and more than one-third claiming they 'somewhat agree' (36%). Approximately one-quarter say they disagree (26%), but only one-tenth of them say they strongly disagree (9%), and 17% say they somewhat disagree. More than one-tenth (11%) of Czechs do not know what opinion to take on this issue.

Figure 2 shows that the total share of the public who agree that euthanasia should be made legal did not significantly change from the previous year and has remained relatively stable since 2011.

Figure 2. Opinions on euthanasia: a time comparison (%)

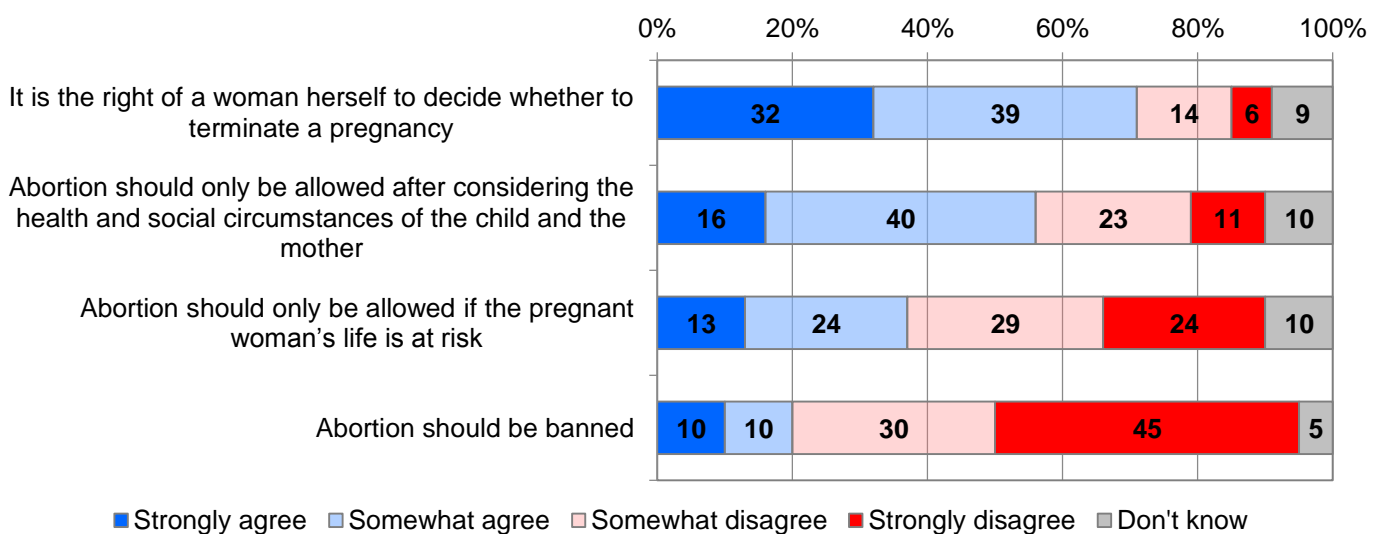


Source: Public Opinion Research Centre, Institute of Sociology CAS (CVVM SOÚ AV ČR, v.v.i.), Czech Society (Naše společnost) 8–18 May 2017, 1019 respondents aged 15 and over, face-to-face interviews.

An analysis of statements according to socio-demographic characteristics revealed that different groups of the population do not differ significantly in their opinions on euthanasia. People who are not religious and people who rank themselves clearly on the right side of the political scale agree somewhat more often than others, while Roman Catholic respondents disagree somewhat more often than others.

The analysis also revealed that there is a connection between opinions on abortion and euthanasia (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Opinions on euthanasia in relation to opinions on abortion (%)



Source: Public Opinion Research Centre, Institute of Sociology CAS (CVVM SOÚ AV ČR, v.v.i.), Czech Society (Naše společnost) 8–18 May 2017, 1019 respondents aged 15 and over, face-to-face interviews.

Technical parameters of the survey

<i>Survey:</i>	<i>Czech Society, v17-05</i>
<i>Survey by:</i>	<i>Public Opinion Research Centre, Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences</i>
<i>Project:</i>	<i>Czech Society – Continuous Public Opinion Research Project of the Public Opinion Research Centre, Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences</i>
<i>Survey dates:</i>	<i>8–18 May 2017</i>
<i>Sampling method:</i>	<i>Quota sampling</i>
<i>Quotas:</i>	<i>Region (NUTS 3 Regions), size of place of residence, sex, age, education</i>
<i>Data source for quota sampling:</i>	<i>Czech Statistical Office</i>
<i>Representativeness:</i>	<i>Population of the Czech Republic over the age of 15</i>
<i>Number of respondents:</i>	<i>1019</i>
<i>Number of interviewers:</i>	<i>248</i>
<i>Data collection method:</i>	<i>Face-to-face interviews conducted by interviewers with respondents - combined CAPI and PAPI questioning</i>
<i>Research instrument:</i>	<i>Standardised questionnaire</i>
<i>Questions:</i>	<i>OV.113, OV.158</i>
<i>Press release no:</i>	<i>ov170615</i>
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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 to apply as the characteristics of the population overall. In our case 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.
