



MASARYK UNIVERSITY

**Faculty  
of Social Studies**



# **Old and New Media and Participation in Czech Society**

*Research Report, 2015*

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The survey concluded in this research report is one of the outcomes of the project 'Transformation of Public and Political Participation in the Context of Changing Media Technologies and Practice' (Masaryk University, 2014). The project's goal is to deliver insight into the relation between the ways Czech citizens use traditional and new media and the ways they participate in political and public issues.

The survey data (N=1998) was collected by the Median agency in October and November 2014, using quota sampling and computer-assisted personal interviewing. The research report briefly concludes with the basic descriptive findings of the survey. Other, more thorough analyses of the findings are to be published eventually in peer-reviewed journals.

# SOURCES OF NEWS CONTENT

Access to information and reception of news are among the key preconditions for civic participation. Specifically in this area we have witnessed major shifts in the past fifteen years: along with the proliferation of uses of online media we have encountered changes in audiences' practices, as well as organizational and economic changes in news production and, in a broader sense, in the media industries in general.

Nevertheless – despite the relatively high penetration of the internet – for a majority of the Czech audience, TV broadcasting maintains the role as the most important source for news in general. The same can be said about political news in particular: almost one third of the Czech 18+ population receives news about politics via TV broadcasting. Online sources (such as the domestic news portals Aktuálně, iDnes or Novinky) follow in second place. (For more detailed information about the Czechs' uses of news media, see Macek et al. 2015.)

Surprisingly, only a few respondents declared SNS (Facebook, Google+, Twitter, etc.) as a source of news. One possible explanation is (from our qualitative data) is that people do not consider – as in face-to-face interactions – SNS as a news source though they encounter news at these platforms. Instead, they experience SNS just as environments where they receive (and recirculate) news from other specific sources.

**TAB. 1: HOW OFTEN DO THEY RECEIVE NEWS IN GENERAL?**

	Never	Less than once a month	Several times a month	Several times a week	Once a day	Several times a day	Do not know / n.a.
N (1998)	108	48	125	385	803	523	6
%	5.4	2.4	6.2	19.3	40.2	26.2	0.3

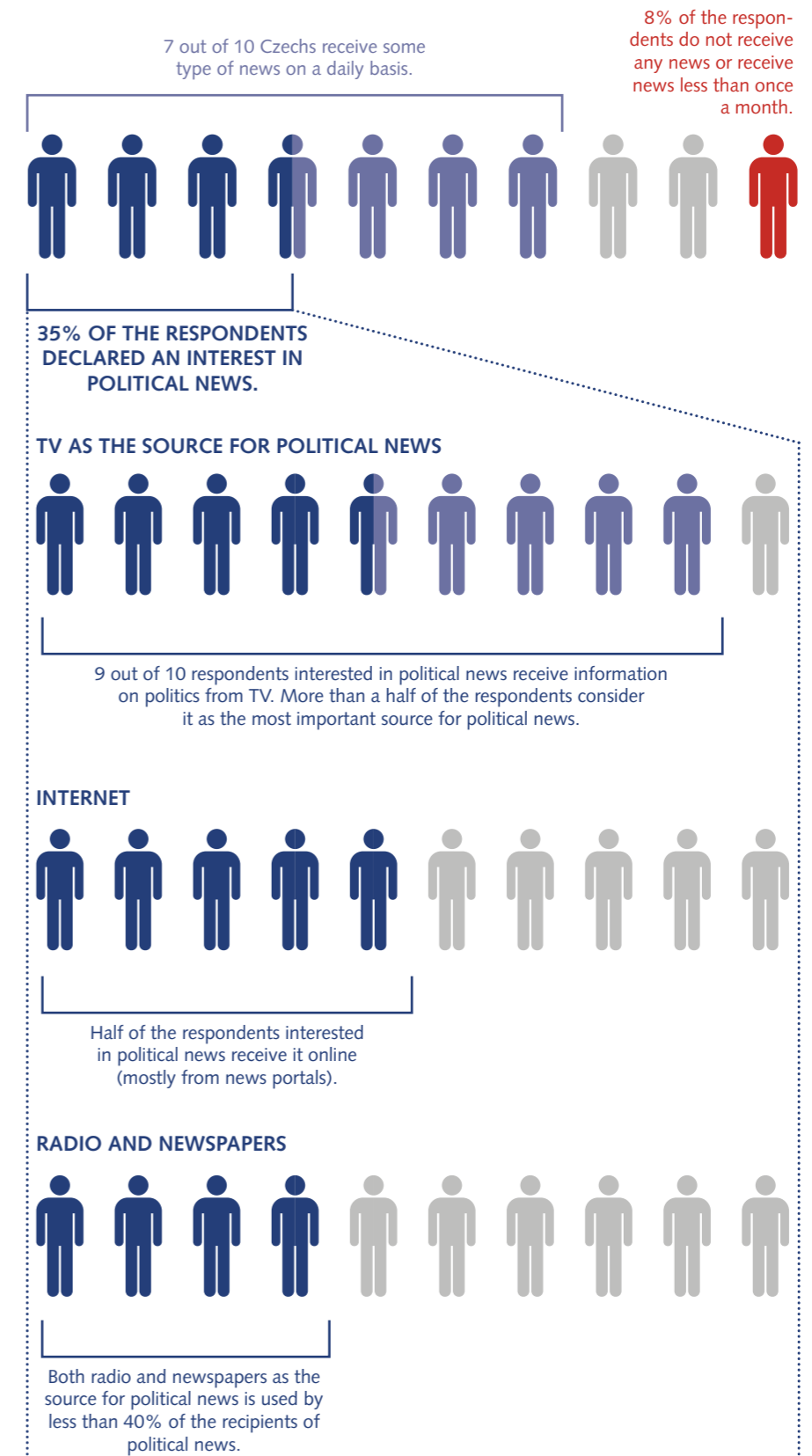
**TAB. 2: IN WHAT MEDIA DO THEY RECEIVE POLITICAL NEWS?**

	Newspapers	Magazines	TV	Radio	Internet	
N (649)		232	57	591	259	334
Interested in political news (%)		35.8	8.7	91.1	39.8	51.5
Overall (%)		11.6	2.9	29.6	13.0	16.7

**TAB 3: IN WHAT KIND OF ONLINE MEDIA DO THEY RECEIVE POLITICAL NEWS?**

	News portal	News aggregator (News Google etc.)	SNS	Elsewhere
N (334)	284	42	38	2
Receiving news online (%)	84.9	12.6	11.3	0.6
Receiving political news (%)	43.7	6.5	5.8	0.3
Overall (%)	14.2	2.1	1.9	0.1

## WHERE DO CZECHS GET THEIR POLITICAL INFORMATION FROM?



## SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Just 2% of the respondents conceive SNS as a source of political news. SNS are conceived rather as a route to other online sources than as a source itself.

# USERS/NONUSERS, THE INTERNET AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

One of the important questions in the research was whether and how the political and civic activities differ among those who use and do not use the internet. Political participation was tested both on the national and local (municipal) levels, indicated through the following activities: voting in elections (European Parliament elections and /or municipal elections), taking part in a demonstration / blockade / public meeting expressing support or resistance to a political issue; signing an online or offline petition; online or offline communication with a politician; and active support for a political candidate, party or other political group (through financial support, taking part in activities, etc.).

Two thirds (62%) of the respondents did at least one of these activities in the past year. Though voting in elections prevailed over other declared activities, almost 16% of the respondents employed at least one of the other, non-electoral forms of participation. The most frequent of the non-electoral forms of participation were signing a petition (12%) and contacting a politician (7%), both being more common on the local / municipal level. Less than half of the people contacting a politician (3% overall) used the Internet (e-mail, web sites, SNS) for that purpose.

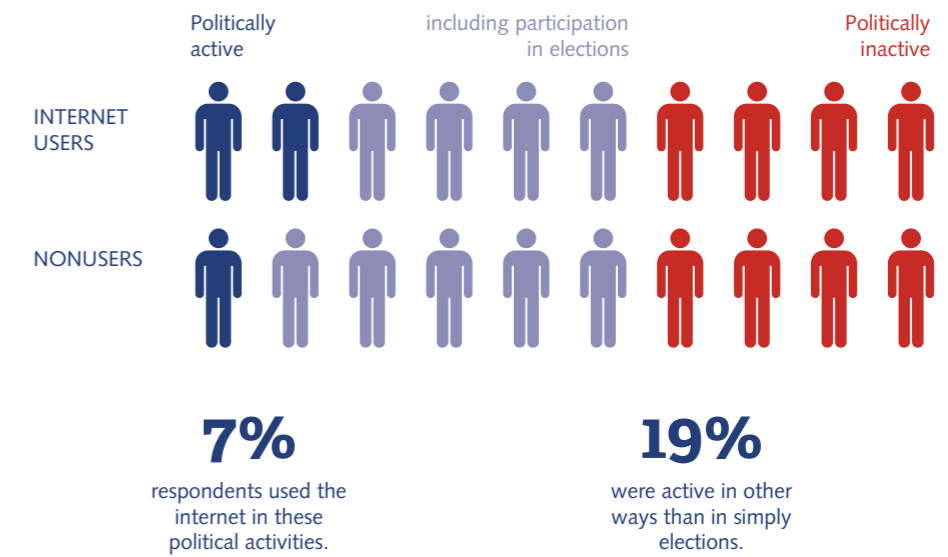
**TAB. 4: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATION**

	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Portion of politically active respondents (%)	55.6	67.6	70.9
Portion of respondents employing other than electoral participation (%)	13.6	19.6	29.1

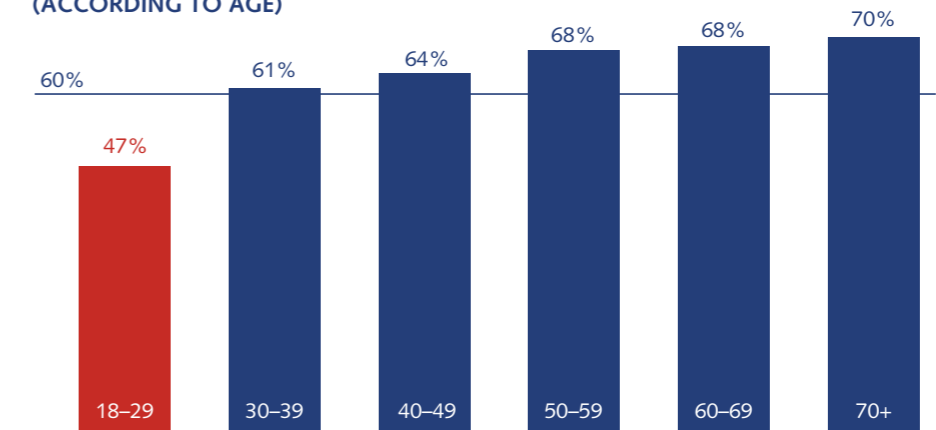
Political participation is closely linked with age and education. The most active are people with a university / college degree and people in the oldest age groups, while more than a half of the respondents in the youngest age group (18-29) are politically inactive. At the same time, young people are the most frequent Internet users - and the Internet is often promised to be a tool which enables better access to information and a broadening of possibilities for political participation. In the case of Internet users, the proportion of people participating was only 3% higher in comparison to non-users.

However, when looking closer at the structure of their participatory activities, Internet users are twice as active than non-users in terms of non-electoral participation, and online participation (online petitions, online communication with a politician, online support to a candidate / party / political event) was practiced by 7% of the respondents in the past year.

## USERS/NONUSERS, THE INTERNET AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION



**SHARE OF PEOPLE POLITICALLY ACTIVE IN 2014 (ACCORDING TO AGE)**



### The young and the (inte)restless?

More than a half of the young people (18-29) in the sample are politically passive, while the most active are people over 70. Young people at the same time are the most active cohort on the internet (97% of them are online), where they have easier access to some new forms of political agency (such as online petitions etc.).

# POLITICS ONLINE

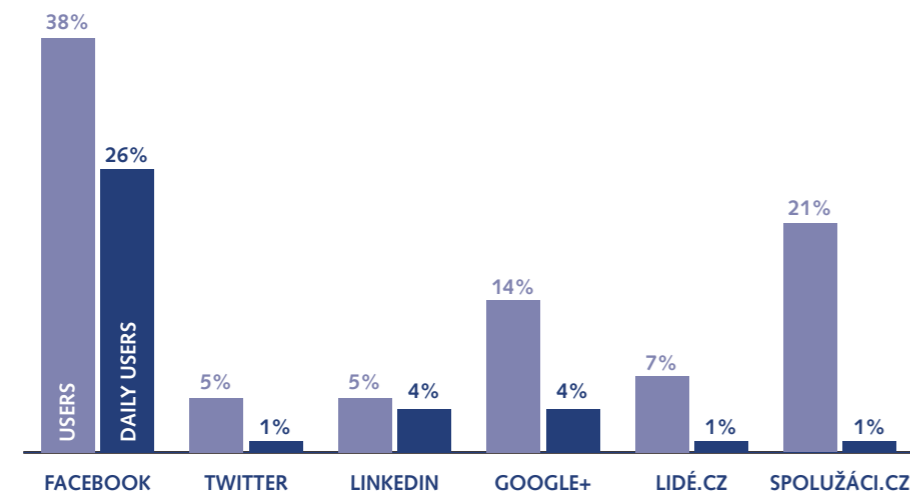
The research also focused on respondents' willingness to engage in conversations on political topics – at home, with friends, as well as on the Internet and on SNS. While at home and with friends, talks about politics occurred at least occasionally within about one third of the respondents, the majority of them (92%) being closed to engaging in such interactions in online environments. (I.e. only 8% of the sample debate politics online.)

15% of the respondents do not talk about politics at all – and the group with the lowest willingness to talk about political topics we encountered was among the youngest respondents (18–29); almost 40% of them do not talk about politics either at home or with friends.

Specifically SNS are one of the online environments that are repeatedly mentioned in relation to talking about politics and even to other political activities. So, the question remains as to whether SNS make any difference in this regard.

41% of the sample use some of the SNS; the most popular – Facebook – is used by 38%. In the age group of 18–29, 81% use it (in the age group 40–49, less than one third of the respondents use it). However, our data suggest that SNS most probably do not trigger broader political debates – the majority of the Czech population does not use Facebook nor Twitter widely for these activities (the latter is used daily for these purposes by a marginal 1% of the respondents). On the Internet in general, only 1% of the respondents debate politics on daily basis – and thus even less specifically on SNS.

## SNS USERS IN THE SAMPLE

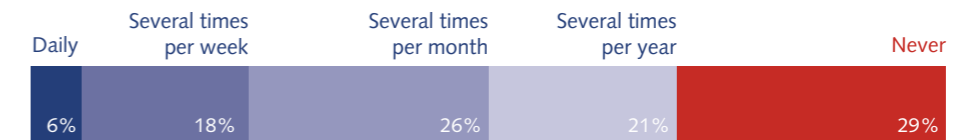


Even in other aspects, SNS do not seem to be strikingly political arenas. SNS are used as a source of political information by 6% of those who explicitly expressed interest in political news. At the same time, SNS offer possibilities as tools for interaction with the political sphere, as they potentially enable citizens to connect with political representatives or with political parties. The option to follow politicians' personal profiles or pages, or to become online friends was utilized by 4% of the respondents, i.e. 11% of the SNS users. The same portion of SNS users is in online contact with political parties or movements.

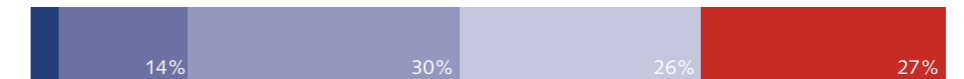
## POLITICS AS A CONVERSATION TOPIC



### AT HOME (WITH THE FAMILY / PARTNER)



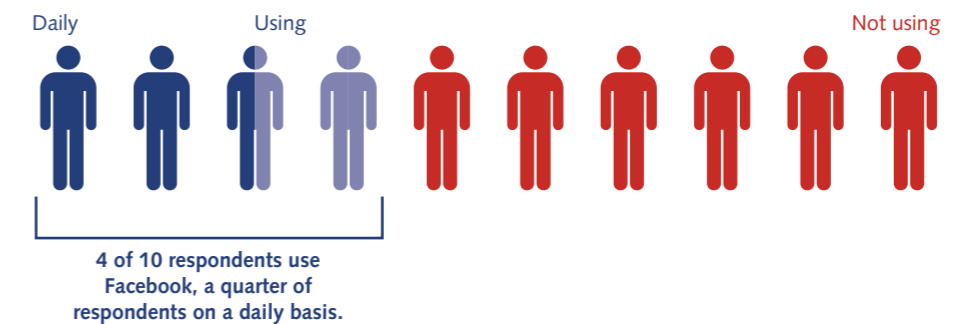
### WITH FRIENDS / COLLEAGUES



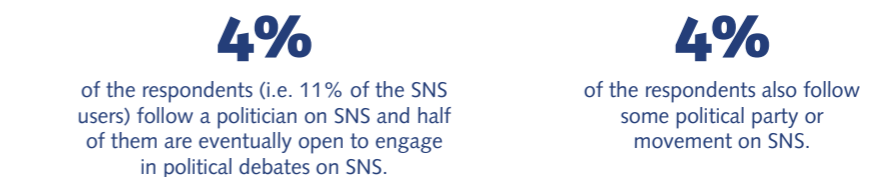
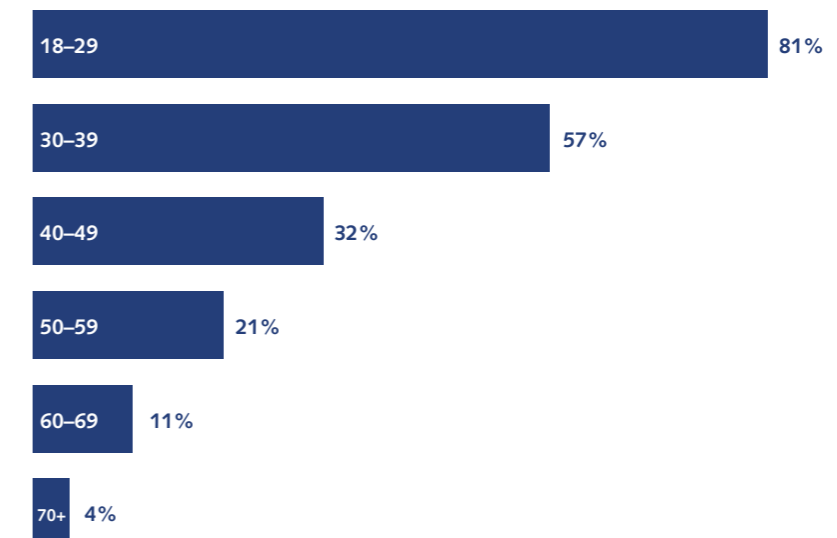
### ONLINE



## WHO IS USING FACEBOOK?



## FACEBOOK USERS / AGE



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