

# The Czech 2021 General Election and Its Impact on the Party System\*

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## Abstract

The article analyses the results of the 2021 general election in the Czech Republic. The election was shaped by two major factors. First, it took place in the shadow of the Covid pandemic crisis. Second, the Czech Republic was governed by a cabinet dominated by a populist political party with unprecedented support from the communist party for most of the term. The major feature of the election campaign was the formation and eventual victory of two anti-populist coalitions. The results brought about a decrease in electoral volatility and fragmentation of the party system. However, the formation of ideologically diverse coalitions is a challenge to the increased stability of the party politics. Moreover, the electoral loss of two traditional leftist parties (the Communists and the Social Democrats) is a major change in the logic of party competition. The populist/anti-populist logic of the campaign undermined the discursive salience of left-right issues and suppressed the usual policy-based competition. Nevertheless, analysis of the electorate shows the dominant role of policy issues in the voters' decision making.

*Keywords:* populism; election; Czech Republic; anti-populism; volatility; party system

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## 1. Introduction

The 2021 general election in the Czech Republic took place in the shadow of the Covid crisis and turned into a referendum about the government led by a populist political entrepreneur, Andrej Babiš, and his political party, ANO. The opposition parties, unprecedentedly united into two pre-election coalitions – SPOLU, formed by three right-wing parties, and the more centrist PirStan coalition of the Czech Pirate Party and the Mayors and Independents – focused their campaigns on anti-populism by pointing to the

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prospective danger of (further) de-democratization of the regime and the pro-Russian leaning of Czech foreign policy (Havlík & Kluknavská, 2022). The neck-and-neck election race ended up with a close victory for SPOLU with 27.8% of the vote, ahead of ANO with 27.2%. More importantly, the two democratic coalitions gained a majority of seats in the lower parliamentary chamber and eventually formed a broad government led by the chairman of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), Petr Fiala. Punished by its participation in or support for the Babiš cabinet, the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), the traditional leftist pillars of the Czech party system, did not reach the 5% threshold and remained outside the lower chamber of the Czech parliament. The only other party that crossed the threshold was the populist radical right Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) with almost 10% of the vote.

The main aims of this introductory article of this special issue of the *Czech Journal of Political Science* are to analyse and discuss the results of the election in the context of the developments of party politics in the Czech Republic. First, we provide a general overview of the results, focusing on the turnout, the gains of political parties, preferential voting, and the regional distribution of electoral support. Second, we use well-established quantitative measurements of the qualities of party systems (electoral volatility, fragmentation, and proportionality) to analyse the impact of the 2021 election on the Czech party system. We also assess the political space to describe the major ideological divides within the party landscape after the general election. Last but not least, using the data from a post-election public opinion survey, we describe individual-level predictors of electoral support for political parties.

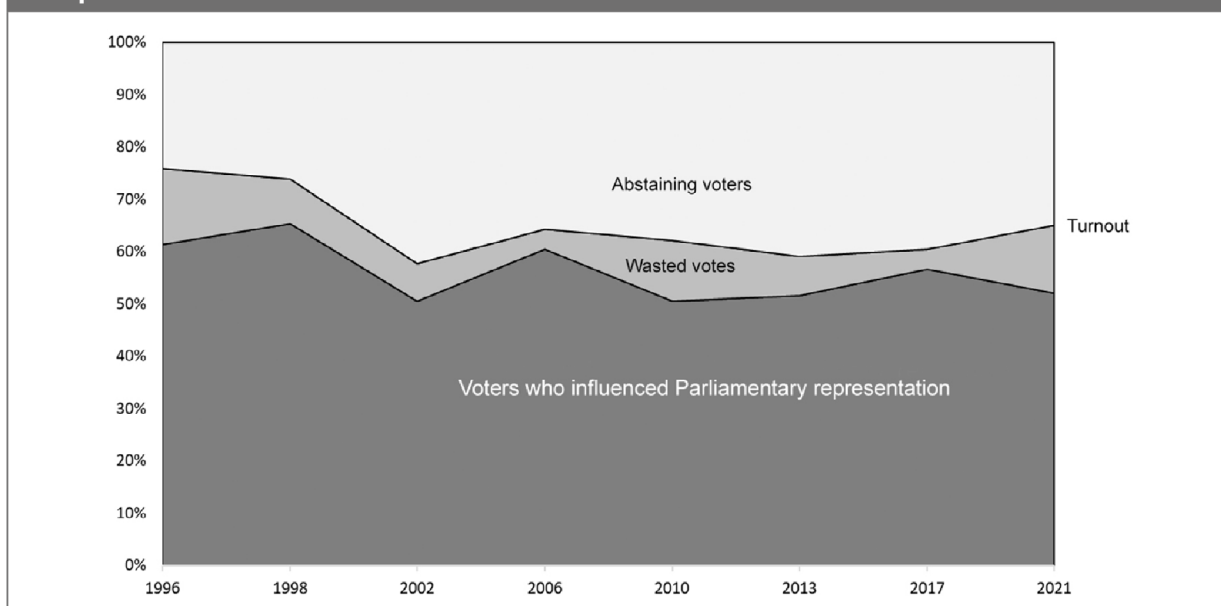
We conclude that the election results show signs of both continuity and discontinuity for party politics in the Czech Republic. The levels of fragmentation and electoral volatility decreased significantly, pointing to partial stabilization of support for political parties including the presence of the two populist parties. Also, despite the anti-populist campaign of the opposition, our analysis of electoral behaviour shows the still-important role of the left-right political attitudes that have formed Czech party politics and electoral behaviour since the beginning of the 1990s (Linek & Lyons, 2013). On the other hand, the polarized campaign around populist governance led to an unprecedented increase in electoral turnout. The second major sign of instability is the electoral loss of the two traditional leftist parties, opening space for a future major restructuring of the party ecosystem.

## 2. Electoral results in space and time

The importance of the 2021 elections results from the highly polarized competition between the bloc of democratic parties and the populist bloc, mirrored in one of the highest turnout rates in the history of the Czech Republic (65.4% of eligible voters), higher by 4.6 percentage points than the previous 2017 general election. This steep increase was similar to the high turnout in 2006 following the 2002 elections which, conversely, experienced the lowest turnout in history after the public discontent with the so-called opposition agreement. The similarity between the 2006 and 2021 elections lies in their

bipolar competition, yet the structure of the competition differs significantly. While the 2006 election was dominated by competition between the traditional left (ČSSD + KSČM) and right (ODS + KDU-ČSL and at that time the centre-right-leaning Greens), the 2021 election was dominated by the conflict between populist ANO and SPD and the other parties that formed two pre-election coalitions to stand as alternatives to the dominant populist ANO. The clear competition pattern and closeness of the race between ANO and SPOLU on the eve of the elections consequently increased the stakes and resulted in the unusually high turnout.

**Figure 1: Shares of abstaining voters, wasted votes, and voters whose vote influenced the composition of Parliament over time**



Source: The authors based on *volby.cz*.

The turnout rate is traditionally highest in Prague and the most economically developed regions, while the lowest turnout is in peripheral areas of the Northern Bohemia and Moravian Silesian regions, and largely in the areas of the ‘phantom borders’ of the former German-speaking Sudetes (Šimon, 2015). Interestingly, the most considerable increase in turnout rate was not in wealthy and already mobilized regions (e.g. Prague) but rather in economically poorer or average ones (the Ústecký and Zlín regions). This suggests that liberal urban voters have been already mobilized, and as a result this segment of voters did not decide the electoral outcome in 2021. Yet the group of decisive voters who newly cast votes originated from the middle class or were citizens of low socio-economic status and from rural or medium-sized cities as opposed to large urban areas. A more precise analysis, presented in this volume (Lysek & TOP 09, 2022), additionally revealed that in the so-called inner peripheries that are characterized by poor economic performance and electoral support for the extreme parties, the turnout decreased not only relatively, but also in absolute numbers. The turnout dynamic and mobilization most likely favoured the SPOLU coalition and were crucial in sinking KSČM, which was traditionally strong in the inner peripheries.

**Table 1: The results of the 2021 general election**

NUTS 3 Region		Turnout	SPOLU	ANO	Piráti+STAN	SPD	PŘÍSAHA	ČSSD	KSČM
Prague	CZ010	70,15	40,02	17,46	22,64	4,59	3,41	4,00	2,14
Central Bohemian	CZ020	67,95	28,74	24,92	19,46	7,79	4,58	4,56	3,48
South Bohemian	CZ031	66,34	29,09	26,65	13,50	8,98	4,51	5,45	4,45
Plzeň	CZ032	64,72	26,57	29,03	13,88	9,96	4,72	4,99	4,14
Karlovy Vary	CZ041	57,10	20,22	33,06	14,23	12,76	4,94	3,78	3,41
Ústí nad Labem	CZ042	57,65	19,77	35,61	13,99	11,87	4,36	3,19	3,92
Liberec	CZ051	64,60	22,77	26,86	21,37	11,00	4,29	3,48	3,01
Hradec Králové	CZ052	67,86	28,58	26,99	15,13	9,05	4,73	4,93	3,44
Pardubice	CZ053	67,89	28,52	26,84	14,09	9,36	4,95	5,05	3,81
Vysočina	CZ063	68,93	28,00	26,73	13,51	8,92	5,23	6,55	4,67
South Moravian	CZ064	66,39	30,03	25,36	14,19	9,35	6,04	4,41	3,65
Olomouc	CZ071	64,69	24,54	29,77	12,35	12,24	4,69	4,53	3,97
Zlín Region	CZ072	67,43	27,78	26,98	13,44	11,38	4,23	4,89	3,32
Moravian-Silesian	CZ080	60,56	20,64	33,73	11,13	12,82	4,86	5,42	3,99
<b>Czech Republic</b>		<b>65,43</b>	<b>27,79</b>	<b>27,12</b>	<b>15,62</b>	<b>9,56</b>	<b>4,68</b>	<b>4,65</b>	<b>3,60</b>

*Source: The authors based on volby.cz.*

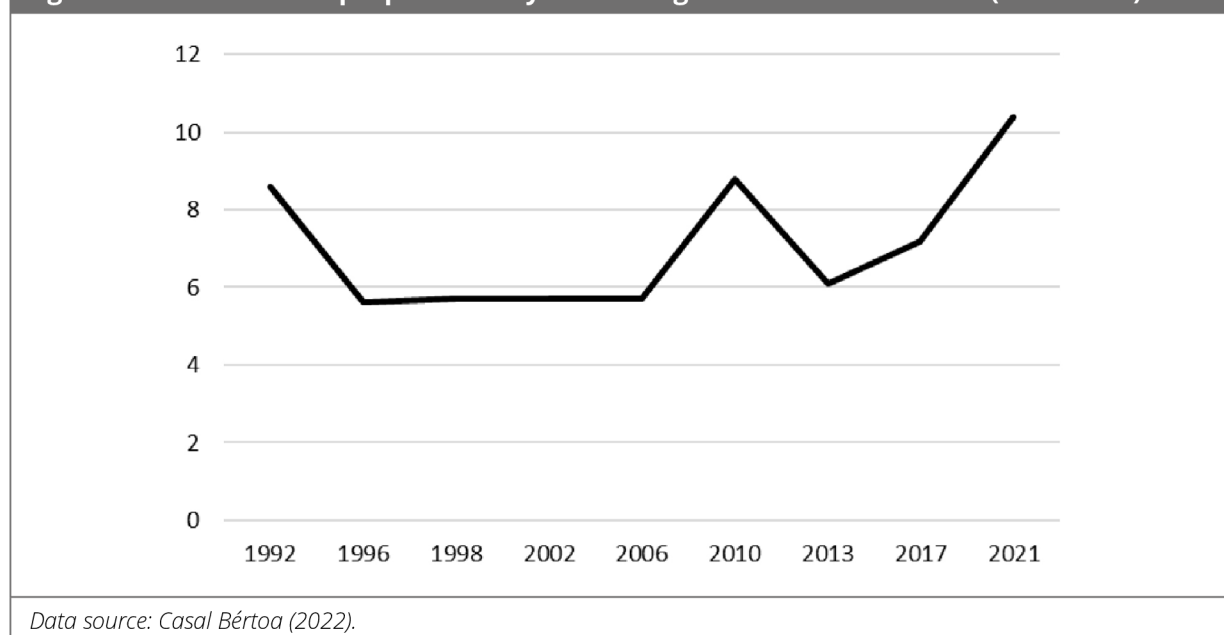
The overall trend for party vote shares is that while the populist bloc features stability and continuity (the dominant ANO relatively lost two percentage points of vote share and the populist SPD lost one percentage point as compared with the 2017 elections), the right-wing and liberal parties managed to get new voters as a result of forming the SPOLU coalition. Due to the complexities following the formation of the two coalitions, we can only speculate what would have been the results for each individual party. While the Pirates+STAN coalition gained roughly the same share of votes as the sum of support for the two parties in previous elections (10.79% and 5.18%), by contrast, the SPOLU coalition gained more votes than the combination of each party in the 2017 elections (ODS 11.32%, KDU-ČSL 5.80%, TOP 09 5.18%).

One of the significant results of the elections, however, is that both traditional left-wing parties, ČSSD and KSČM, failed to get over the electoral threshold. Even while celebrating its hundredth anniversary, the KSČM is not represented in the Chamber of Deputies for the first time since its establishment. The 2021 elections thus resulted in the collapse of the traditional left bloc, yet the process of the decline of the traditional left has been materializing for some time (Maškarinec, 2019, 2020; Voda & Havlík, 2021). The vote shifting from traditional left parties to populist ones was first noticeable in the 2016 regional

elections. The major shift then occurred in parliamentary elections a year later (Lysek, Pánek, & Lebeda, 2021). The poor performance of both parties in the subsequent local (2018) and regional elections (2020) was a signal of this collapse (Kouba & Lysek, 2022). Yet neither party tried to reform or change its leaders. The defeat of both parties was also caused simply by luck, as they only narrowly missed the threshold. Three equifinal factors might be blamed. First, the aggressive campaign by Andrej Babiš that further mobilized populist voters and former ČSSD and KSČM voters. Second, the anti-political establishment newcomer Přísaha ('The Oath') movement led by Robert Šlachta (a former high-ranking policeman with a reputation for fighting political corruption) took some of the traditional left voters. Third, decreasing turnout in the inner peripheries which were the base of KSČM. Each of these three factors alone cannot be blamed for massive vote switching, but together they had a multiplicative effect that dislodged the parties from the Chamber of Deputies.

The 2021 elections were held under a new electoral law that was hastily and surprisingly smoothly passed before the elections in response to a Constitutional Court ruling. The main conclusion of the Constitutional Court ruling on the former electoral law was that the electoral system did not fulfil the proportionality principle and that votes had unequal weight across constituencies (Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic, 2021). The former D'Hondt formula, in combination with the relatively small size of electoral constituencies (14 constituencies), allegedly produced disproportionate results penalizing those parties with the strongest support in smaller-sized and more disproportional constituencies. While the number of constituencies remained unchanged, the electoral formula was modified to the Imperiali quota (whereby unallocated seats are redistributed in the second tier on the level of the whole country), and the electoral threshold for coalitions was lowered (to 8% for a two-party coalition and 11% for a coalition composed of three or more parties) (Charvát, 2022). This change eased the formation of the two coalitions of SPOLU and Pirates-STAN politically. One of the most interesting results of the elections is that despite the electoral reform, the indexes of disproportionality actually increased. This may be partly attributable to the fact that three parties gained vote shares just slightly under the five per cent electoral threshold, which resulted in the highest share (19.91%) of votes for parties that did not pass the threshold (see Figure 1). On the other hand, the effect of the new electoral system on fragmentation of the party system was negligible, even nonexistent. The fragmentation decreased since the two traditional left parties are no longer represented in the Chamber of Deputies. However, if parliamentary representation was counted in terms of parties and not coalitions, the number of parties would be seven instead of just four.

The two anti-populist pre-election coalitions had an effect on the number of preferential votes and how they were cast. The preferential voting was a phenomenon of the 2021 elections which is mirrored in this special issue (Bakke, 2022; Balík & Hruška, 2022; Haase Formánková et al., 2022; Vartazaryan & Škultéty, 2022). Balík and Hruška (2022) and Vartazaryan and Škultéty (2022) show that regarding the two coalitions, the intra-party competition may become inter-party competition, where one or more parties may gain significantly from preferential voting at the expense of its partner(s). Indeed, Pirate Party leaders were surprised on election night, upon seeing that they would gain only four

**Figure 2: The level of disproportionality based on general election results (1992–2021)**

seats while their smaller coalition partner STAN gained 33 seats. Haase Formánková et al. (2022) found that preferential voting helped women candidates to gain mandates despite their rather low rankings on the candidacy lists, when controlling for the occupational status and sociodemographics of the candidates, while Bakke (2022) analysed preferential voting in the broader context of the composition of party elites in Czechia.

**Table 2: Self-reported use of preferential votes**

2021	ANO	SPOLU	Pir+STAN	SPD	KSČM	ČSSD	SPOLU	SPOLU	Pir+STAN
Yes	18,3%	34,9%	41,9%	30,7%	19,2%	22,0%	34,9%	34,9%	41,9%
No	79,9%	64,3%	56,9%	68,2%	78,8%	76,3%	64,3%	64,3%	56,9%
2017	ANO	ODS	Piráti	SPD	KSČM	ČSSD	KDU-ČSL	TOP 09	STAN
Yes	28,5%	29,0%	12,9%	26,0%	25,0%	22,1%	43,6%	36,0%	45,8%
No	71,5%	71,0%	87,1%	74,0%	75,0%	77,9%	56,4%	64,0%	54,2%

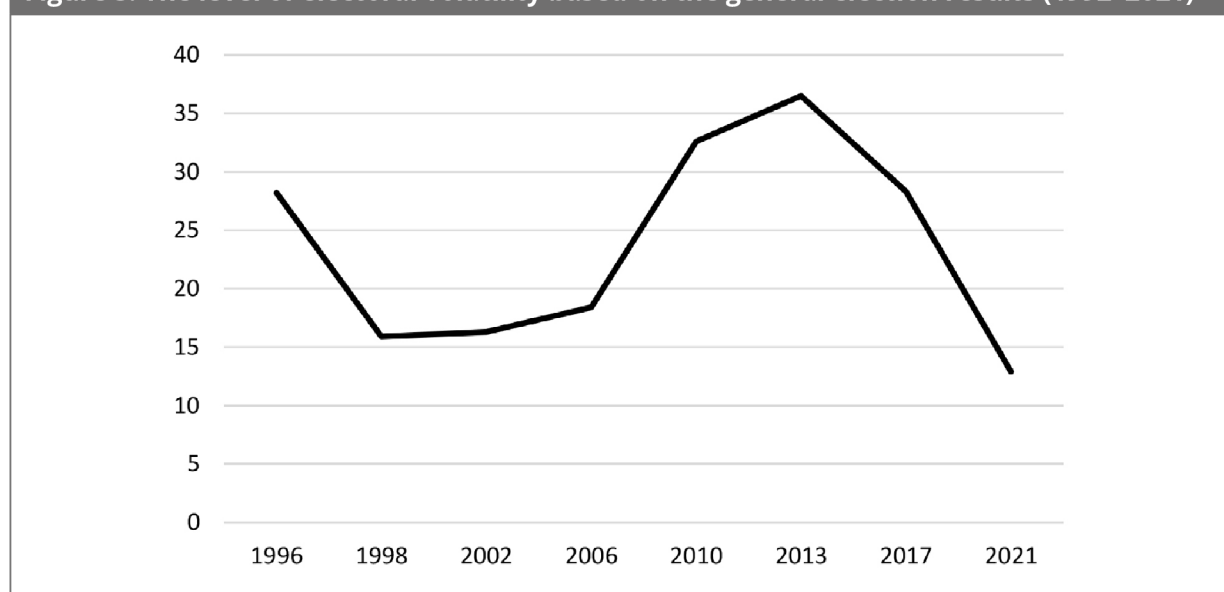
*Source: Czech post-election studies from 2017 and 2021, Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences.*

One of the most recognized quantitative indicators of the stability of party systems is electoral volatility, most commonly measured by the Pedersen index (Pedersen, 1979), calculated as  $V = \frac{1}{2} \sum |p_{it} - p_{it-1}|$  where  $p_{it}$  refers to the electoral result of a political party in the election and  $p_{it-1}$  is the electoral result of the same party on the previous election. After the first turbulent years after the fall of communism, the Czech party system became one of the most stable in the Central and Eastern Europe region, typified by low levels of electoral volatility (Lane & Ersson, 2007; Haughton & Deegan-Krause, 2015). However, the results of the 2010 and 2013 general elections shook the once stable party setting (see Figure 3) and the volatility skyrocketed to unprecedented levels. The increased instability in electoral support was mainly caused by the emergence and subsequent growth in

support for new populist parties such as Public Affairs, ANO and the two political parties of Tomio Okamura, a well-known political entrepreneur (Havlík, 2015), and the parallel decline of the electoral base of the established parties.

Although the most common trajectory of the new populist challengers is to briefly burn brightly and then disappear (Haughton & Deegan-Krause, 2020), the general election of 2017, and even more so that of 2021, brought about stabilization of the support for the populists and an overall decrease in the systemic level of electoral volatility to the historically lowest level (as measured by the Pedersen index). In 2021, volatility was fed mainly by an increase in support for the parties that formed the anti-populist coalitions, the electoral losses of the traditional left parties, and by the decent (but still sub-threshold) result of *Přísaha*. Indeed, support for ANO dropped by a mere 1.5 percentage points, and support for SPD declined by one percentage point (of course, the change had a big impact on the overall election results), while support for the parties forming SPOLU increased by more than five percentage points (and support for the Pirates and STAN remained almost unchanged).

Figure 3: The level of electoral volatility based on the general election results (1992–2021)



Data source: Casal Bértoa (2022).

### 3. Policy positions and the structure of party competition

The party system of the Czech Republic used to be characterized by unidimensional competition concentrated around the economically defined conflict between the leftwing (ČSSD and KSČM) and rightwing (ODS and smaller parties such as ODA and TOP 09) parties, although the changing patterns of government formation, with repeated switching between the left and the right, always made the party system unpredictable to some extent (Havlík, 2015). The dominant position of the left-right divide has been undermined both

discursively and in voters' decision-making with the emergence and electoral successes of populist political parties.<sup>1</sup> At the discursive level, Public Affairs in 2010, ANO and Dawn of Direct Democracy (later SPD), and to some extent the Pirates<sup>2</sup>, in subsequent election cycles constructed a deep division between the allegedly corrupt and incompetent established political parties and the pure and talented Czech people, and tried to raise this conflict above the 'obsolete' contest between the left and the right. At the electoral level, the populists were able to collect votes across the established social and political divides and consequently weakened the explanatory power of the existing cleavages (Havlík & Voda, 2018).

The 2021 general election did not depart from this trend. On the contrary, after four years of government including and then dominated by populist ANO (in this special issue, Ostrá analyses the discourse of ANO before the election) that turned the Czech Republic in an illiberal swerve (Bustikova & Guasti, 2017), and also in the shadow of an electoral system favouring bigger parties (read: ANO in 2021), the opposition parties formed two pre-election coalitions and united around an anti-populist discourse. The populism of ANO and SPD, discursively linked by SPOLU and PirStan to uncivil, spendthrift, undemocratic, but also pro-Russian and pro-Chinese policies (see Havlík & Kluknavská, 2022), was presented as a major threat to the future of the Czech Republic.

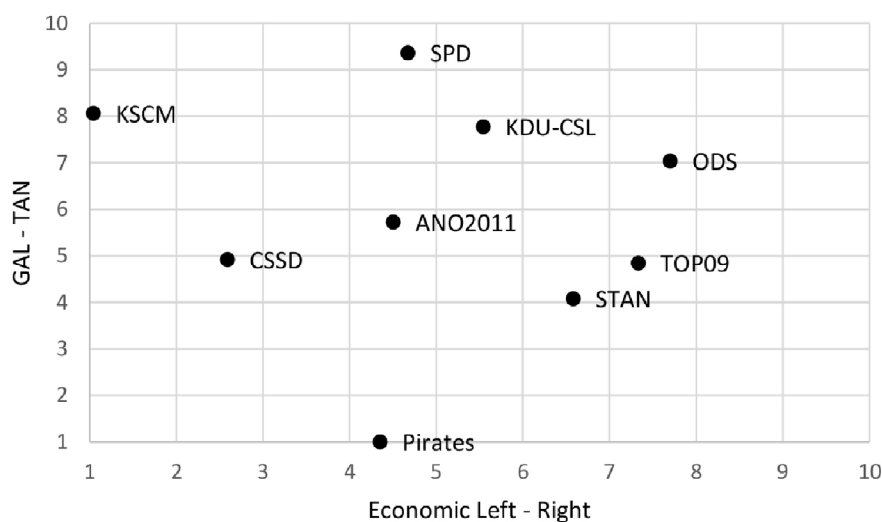
The role of anti-populism as a discursive keystone of the electoral coalitions has affected party competition in several ways. It facilitated the formation of the government of SPOLU and PirStan led by Petr Fiala, the chairman of ODS. While sharing an anti-populist view, as the CHES 2019 data show, the governing parties are ideologically diverse, with the Pirates departing most from the other coalition parties. While ODS, TOP 09 and STAN share more or less right-wing economic policies, KDU-ČSL tends to be more centrist with stress on social policies, and the Pirates prefer more centre-left economic solutions with more state interventionism. Similarly, there are significant differences in terms of socio-cultural issues as well, for example in the attitudes of the governing parties towards European integration. While ODS and KDU-ČSL are strongly conservative, TOP 09, STAN and the Pirates in particular are on the liberal side of the social-cultural axis, not to mention the original anti-establishment and anti-corruption appeal of the Pirates, moving them paradoxically closer to ANO and SPD.

Although the most divisive issues have been left unaddressed by the coalition government, it is quite likely that the parties will try to stress their differences so as not to lose their ideological identities. After all, not long after the election, TOP 09 raised the question of Czech membership in the Eurozone, and the Pirates, and TOP 09, stressed the need to legalize marriage for same-sex couples, followed by a reaction by conservative MPs, including those from KDU-ČSL, ODS and STAN, to amend the Constitution to define marriage as a heterosexual partnership. That being said, despite the partial ideological closeness of the governing parties, the formation of the Fiala cabinet was facilitated by the anti-populism shared by all the coalition parties. Two factors related to anti-populism, around which the governing parties built their campaigns and formed the government, could weaken the stability of the government. First, the ideological differences hidden during the campaign under the anti-populist cover may lead to conflicts between the coalition parties. Second, the moralistic nature of anti-populism, which stresses the need



to restore a pure and decent politics, sets high expectations for the government, making it vulnerable to potential corruption scandals, compromises, and the politicking that is natural for pragmatic politics (Canovan, 1999).

**Figure 4: Positions of political parties in the political space (economic left-right and GAL-TAN)**

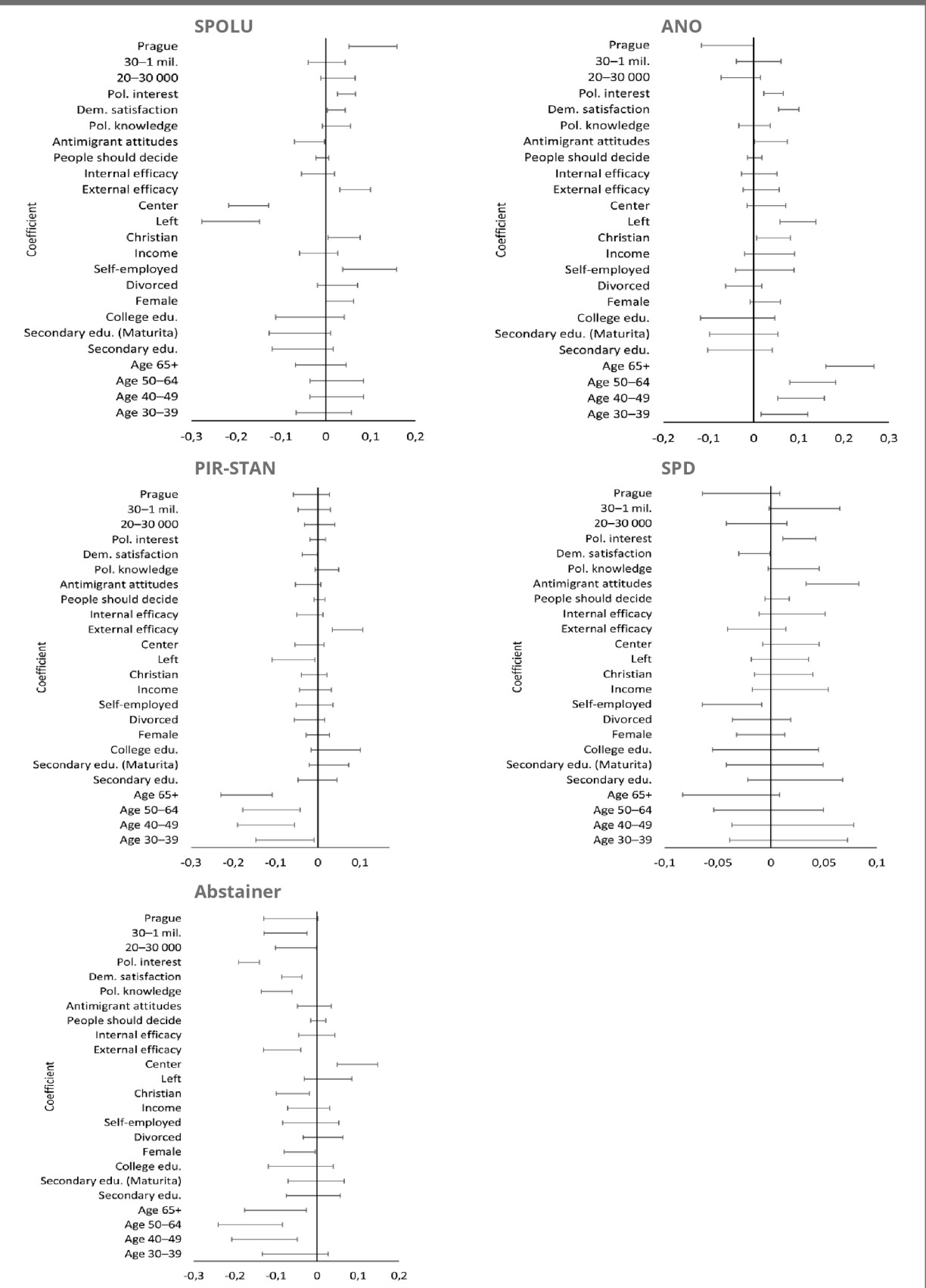


Data source: Jolly et al. (2022).

#### 4. Who are the voters for the Czech parties?

In the last part of this introductory article we will analyse the electoral support for political parties. The long term, although lately weakened, dominance of the left-right competition has been mirrored in the patterns of electoral behaviour characterized by class voting and the crucial role of socio-economic political attitudes (Linek & Lyons, 2013). The Czech post-election study conducted by CVVM offers data for individual-level analysis of voters including sociodemographic as well as attitudinal and psychological factors that are associated with electoral choice. This analysis of the post-election data has rather an exploratory purpose as the most important predictors are employed while relaxing the possibilities of more complex (e.g. interactive and conditional) associations between sociodemographic variables, attitudinal factors and electoral choice. Figure 5 presents the results of a multinomial logistic regression by means of marginal effects plots that show the average changes in the predicted probability of voting for a party or abstaining (all respondents are thus included in model). The values show the general effects (a unit increase) of independent variables for every category of the dependent variable (probability) (Long & Freese, 2014). Additionally, we have standardized the independent variables by Gelman's (2008) method of two standard deviations. This transformation allows for direct comparisons of continuous variables on different scales to indicator variables (e.g. gender); see Annex I for the coding and wording of the variables.

Figure 5: Individual predictors of the electoral choice



Note: N = 1,490. Ten multiple imputations by chained equations are used to replace missing data. Scale variables are transformed by 2SD and can be interpreted as indicator variables (from minimum to maximum). Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup>: 0.235.

Source: The authors, based on a Czech post-election study by CVM.

Regarding the first plot for SPOLU, being self-employed (1) as opposed to all other occupational statuses combined (0), the probability of voting for SPOLU increases by 0.097 percentage points. From the model, we can observe that SPOLU voters are located in Prague, they feature high external efficacy (to the perceived ability to influence politics as a consequence of the responsibility of political institutions) and self-reported political interest, they are oriented towards the right side of the scale (left and centre positions have negative values), and are more likely to be Christians (this is because KDU-ČSL is part of the coalition). The results thus support the finding from the aggregate data analysis by Lysek and TOP 09 in this volume. Yet the model on the individual level data shows that education is not a significant predictor and that SPOLU was able to attract voters of lower SES.

The voters for the populist ANO movement display the classical characteristics of the traditional left voter, and thus ANO is a party substituting for the traditional left as formerly represented by ČSSD. The party's strongest positive association is with the age group over 65 and self-positioning on the left, yet not in the centre. They also have support from citizens that declared their religion as Christianity. Interestingly, ANO voters are satisfied with the democratic functioning of the state and are interested in politics. This can be explained by the fact the populist leader Andrej Babiš was prime minister. It may be that when populist parties in power, their voters have a positive perception of democratic functioning. However, no variables associated with populism and an anti-immigration stance can predict the probability of voting for ANO. There is thus a gap between the expert evaluation and voters' subjective perception of the party's position on the populism scale.

The Pirates-STAN coalition has a somewhat diverse group of supporters as most of the predictors fail to explain why citizens voted for this coalition. Generally, we can conclude that younger voters and those who perceive high external political efficacy supported them. The models indicate that this coalition has divergent yet complementary voters. For example, the Pirates gain votes from urban middle class and younger voters (Maškariš, 2020), while STAN has a strong support in smaller municipalities in certain regions. The model for the fourth party that entered parliament, the populist SPD, fails to explain the support for the SPD, suggesting that this group of voters is heterogeneous. This is similar to other analysis of populist party support in Western Europe (Spruyt, Keppens, & Van Droogenbroeck, 2016). Yet anti-immigrant attitudes and not being self-employed are the most relevant predictors of the SPD vote.

## 5. Conclusion

This article summarized the results of the 2021 general election in the Czech Republic. Based on the analysis of basic descriptive data, selected quantitative indicators characterizing party systems, and the data on voter behaviour, we can conclude that the election results reflect both stability and instability. Both electoral volatility and fragmentation decreased, indicating stabilization of support for the major political parties. Indeed, support for most of the parties did not change dramatically (comparing electoral coalitions with the results of their member parties) and no new political party crossed the electoral

threshold. On the other hand, two major changes undermining the stability of party politics characterized the election. First, the defeat of ČSSD and KSČM left the traditional left outside the lower parliamentary chamber. Although this does not necessarily mean that left-wing voters remain unrepresented (on the contrary, the analysis of voting behaviour shows the tendency of left-leaning voters to support ANO), the electoral disaster for the Social Democrats and the Communists is a major tremor in the party system setting as it developed after the fall of communism. Second, the electoral strategy of the opposition parties/electoral coalitions concentrated around anti-populism and (logically) weakened the salience of the left-right divide, the most important political conflict in Czech party politics since the 1990s.

The Czech Republic does not depart from the developments in party politics in other (Central and Eastern) European countries, which are characterized by the strong position of populist political parties and the decline of established political actors and the traditional political left in particular. The government, dominated by a populist actor, shaped the party competition, which led to the formation of anti-populist coalitions, a strategy well-known from other countries including the anti-Mečiar coalition in Slovakia in the 1990s and the anti-Fidesz alliance in the 2022 general election in Hungary. The common challenge for anti-populist coalitions is their fragility caused by ideological diversity hidden under the anti-populist cover (see the experience of the anti-Mečiar Slovak Democratic Coalition and the fragility of the Dzurinda cabinet). However, the absence of non-populist opposition and the lasting threat of populist government may serve as a strong glue for the coalition parties.

The collection of articles published in this special issue analyse major features of the election. Ostrá focuses on the changes in the discourse of ANO before the elections. A series of articles explains the role of preferential voting, which was influenced by the existence of pre-electoral coalitions, and Bakke analyses in detail the personal composition of the newly elected lower parliamentary chamber. Lysek and TOP 09 and Linek and Škvrňák (2022) focus on the spatial distribution of electoral support and the effects of economic voting, respectively. All-in-all, this special issue offers new and detailed insights into the electoral results, but also the trajectory of party politics in general, hoping to contribute to understanding the complexity of Czech politics.

## Endnotes:

1. By 'populism', we understand a thin ideology or a discursive strategy that 'considers society to be ultimately separated onto two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite", and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people' (Mudde, 2004, p. 543; Stanley, 2008).
2. Classifying the Pirates as populist is a bit tricky. In 2017, they campaigned with a strong anti-establishment message, but instead of people-centrism (the key component of populism), they relied on technocratic or rather smart IT-based policy solutions. What they shared with Public Affairs, ANO, and to some extent Dawn and SPD was anti-corruption appeal and a blurry ideology accommodating both radical left stances on the one hand and right-wing libertarian views on the other hand.

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