Population Structure (Dagmar Bartoňová), pp. 7–20

In the Czech Republic, like in other demographically advanced countries, the current structural changes affecting the age structure of the population are of greater significance for population growth than the actual size of the population in numbers is. The pace of demographic ageing at the start of the 21st century has been proceeding more rapidly than it was the end of the 20th century. Population ageing in the 1990s and the first years of the 21st century has resulted first of all from a dramatic fall in the proportion of children in the population owing to a decline in the fertility rate: while in 1991 there were 2.1 million children aged 15 and under living in the Czech Republic, by 2006 the figure was only 1.5 million. Owing to irregularities in the age structure, established in the first half of the 20th century through fluctuations in the birth rate and also stemming from the loss of life in war, the growth in the number and percentage of people over the age of 60 was gradual and fluctuating. The percentage of the elderly decreased partly as a result of the increased number of people of productive age born in the natality waves after the Second World War and in the 1970s. In the first decade of the 21st century, however, population ageing at the base of the age period began to be accompanied by more substantial population ageing at the peak. The 1.9 million people over the age of 60 at the end of the 20th century grew during the first six years of the 21st century by more than 230 000 seniors, as the large cohorts born at the end of the Second World War and at the start of the 1950s gradually began to reach the age of 60. The increase in the percentage of people in this age category, which in 2006 accounted for more than one-fifth of the population, also resulted from an improving mortality rate. The age structure of the population of the Czech Republic suggests that more rapid demographic ageing should be expected in the future, as the large cohorts in productive age are currently growing older and they will not be replaced in middle age with any comparably large subsequent generations.

Changes in the structure of the population by marital status especially reflect the pronounced decrease in marriage intensity, to a lesser degree also decreasing mortality intensity, and the high divorce rate, mirroring the changes in social and reproductive behaviour. Changes have primarily affected the marital and reproductive behaviour of the younger generation, which happened to be the large birth cohorts from the population waves in the 1970s. The structure of the population by marital status has experienced an especially large increase in the percentage of young single people and there has also been an increase in the proportion of divorced people in the population, as a result of which the percentage of married people also decreased. Owing to an improvement in mortality conditions the percentage of widows/widowers decreased and the percentage of older married women especially increased. The postponement of marriage and the falling mortality rate have been most reflected in an increase in the average age of married people combined with a reduction in the number of marriages.

The educational and ethnic structures of the population are among the other factors observed that have an affect on demographic reproduction. The level of education, measured as the percentage of people who have attained a level of education higher than basic, rose quickly after the Second World War, but the Czech Republic nonetheless continues to lag behind advanced European states in its overall level of education. The percentage of people with higher education evolved from very low foundations, and although in the 1970s and 1980s the number of people with higher education grew each decade roughly by one-half, and in the 1990s by one-third, according to the 2001 population census just under 9% of the population over the age of 15 had a university education. When post-secondary vocational education is taken into account, just under 10% of the population (or 13.5% of the population aged 30–34) had tertiary education (according to the ISCED classification). There are persistent differences in the levels of education of men and women, even among the younger generation, despite on the whole a more rapidly increasing rise in the level of education among women than men. Since 1991 more women than men have had complete secondary education, but the percentage of women with university education in 2001 was just under two-thirds of the percentage of men with university education. In 2001 there were almost 100 000 more women university graduates than in 1991, which constituted an increase of 40%, while the increase among men with university education was 80 000.
From the perspective of ethnicity, the Czech Republic is a very homogeneous state. People of Czech ethnicity (which includes Moravian and Silesian) made up 94% of the population in 2001, while the largest other ethnic group was made up of Slovaks. The size of other ethnic groups were just fractions of a percent, even though the 2001 census for the first time included in the population foreign nationals with permanent resident status (just under 70 000 people).

**Marriage Rate** (Ludmila Fialová), pp. 20–30

One of the most important aspects of current population development in the Czech Republic is the low marriage rate. During the 1990s marriage intensity fell substantially while the age of spouses at the time of marriage rose. In the years from 2001 to 2005 there were only 52 000 marriages a year on average, which was one-third less than at the end of the 1980s. The percentage of first-time marriages among the total number of new marriages in a year stabilised at 64%. Among spouses, three-quarters were single at the time of marriage, one-quarter divorced, and the percentage of divorced fell in recent years to just 1%.

Young people are marrying for the first time at an increasingly later age and less often than in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The average age at the time of first marriage (according to marriage tables) in 2006 was 31.1 years for men and 28.5 years for women (2 years older than in 2000 and 6.7 years older than in 1989). This trend has resulted in high table percentages of single people up to the age of 30: in 2006 it was 62% for men and 46% for women (in 1989, 18% for men and 8% for women). The age at which single men most often married shifted between 2000 and 2006 from 26 (the probability that a single man of that age would marry was 0.085) to 28 (the probability of marriage simultaneously fell to 0.073). The age at which single women most often married for the first time rose from 24–26 to 26–27, but the intensity decreased (to 0.090-0.093; in 2000 the probability that a single girl aged 24–26 would marry was still higher than 0.10). The still just slight increase in the marriage intensity of single women around the age of 30 does not compensate for the reduction in intensity at a younger age. There was also a decrease in repeated marriages. The amount of time that elapsed between the breakdown of a person’s marriage and their entry into a new marriage also grew longer: for example, in 2006, 28% of men and 26% of women married within ten years of a divorce (in 1989 the figure for that period of time was 49% of men and 48% women). Society is experiencing an evident differentiation of behaviour by education level: in comparison with other education groups people with complete university education marry more often. The percentage of new married couples in which both spouses have the same education level has remained over the long term at 57%.

The reduced marriage rate in the population of the Czech Republic is gradually creating a different structure of the population by marital status, especially among the population under the age of 30. And given that the cohorts born at the end of the 1970s, and even younger cohorts, which are smaller than the cohorts born in the mid-1970s, are gradually reaching the age of currently the highest marriage rate, this means that in the years immediately to come the number of marriages will probably continue to fall. The constant decline in the number and percentage of men and women living in marriage has subsequently been reflected both in a lower birth rate and in the decrease of two-parent families. Although it is possible to assume that the number of people living in consensual unions will increase, it is clear that there will be an increasing proportion of singles in the population.

**Divorce Rate** (Květa Kalibová), pp. 30–40

A high divorce rate has traditionally been one of the negative characteristics of population development in the Czech Republic. In Czech society, divorce is and has always been regarded as an acceptable solution to marital problems, and legislative trends have also reflected this view, while a key role in this has also been played by the relatively low degree of religiosity in the country. Changes in demographic behaviour since the start of the 1990s, evoked by the overall changes in society and described as the second demographic transition, did not affect the divorce rate, and in the long-term outlook the trend of a high divorce intensity has remained, although structural characteristics have undergone certain changes.

Since the start of the 1980s the number of divorces has continuously risen and the annual number of divorces only fell below a level of thirty thousand in 1991–1992 and in 1999–2000. At the start of the 1990s there was only a brief drop in the number of divorces in connection with significant changes in society, and a temporary decline in the absolute number of divorces occurred in 1999–2000.
as a result of the introduction of new legislation on the family, which made the process of filing for divorce more complicated and lengthy, especially in the case of marriages with dependent children. However, in subsequent years the amendment to the Family Act did not have the expected longer-term effect on reducing the divorce rate. In the longer term the structure of divorces by order has remained intact. Out of the total annual number of divorces the percentage of first-order divorces for both men and women is around 80%, while 17–18% are second-order divorces, and higher-order divorces account for roughly 2% of the total. Since the start of the 1990s the crude divorce rate has hovered around 3 divorces per 1000 inhabitants. The sharp increase in the divorce index figures was primarily influenced by the gradual decrease in the annual number of marriages, and in 2006, 59 divorces were granted for every 100 marriages that took place. The marriage divorce rate equals around 12–14 divorces a year for every 1000 marriages, or for every 1000 married women. The lifetime divorce rate is currently approaching 50%, which means that almost every second marriage sooner or later ends in divorce. The higher divorce rates by age for men in comparison with women are not just the result of the age difference of spouses at the time of marriage but also stem from the higher proportion of second and more repeated marriages among the male population. The highest divorce intensity is in the 20–29 year-old age group for both sexes. The structure of divorces by marriage duration has not changed in the long term, and there has been a continuing trend of the highest intensity of divorce occurring in the first five or six years of marriage, followed by a gradual decline in the subsequent years of its duration. The proportion of divorces of couples with dependent minors out of the total number of divorces has decreased slightly since the start of the 1990s towards more divorces occurring in childless marriages, and this trend has continued into the first years of the 21st century. The relative ease with which a divorce can be obtained is also evident from the decisions on divorce petitions, with the number of petitions refused representing less than 1% of the total petitions filed. Women continue to be the party that files for divorce in two-thirds of cases. Based on trends to date no significant changes can be expected in divorce behaviour.

Abortion (Jiřina Kocourková) pp. 40–50

The changes that occurred in Czech society after 1989 laid the foundations for a transformation of reproductive behaviour, and that included a continually decreasing number of abortions. While before 1989 the Czech Republic, together with the majority of former socialist states of eastern Europe, ranked among countries with a high abortion rate, during the next fifteen years its abortion rate grew closer to that observed in western European countries. This development occurred without any legislative changes, which confirms the importance of the effective prevention of unwanted pregnancy by making modern contraception easily available.

The number of abortions fell in the 1990s, and in recent years the decrease in numbers has slowed. In 2006, there were just 0.34 abortions per woman. While the number of abortions is decreasing, the number of spontaneous abortions or miscarriages has been steadily increasing. This trend may be connected with the greater pregnancy risks older women have. Before 1990 the highest abortion intensity was observed among women in a wider age group, between 20 and 34 years of age. The trend since 1990 has revealed a significant reduction in the abortion rate in most age groups and at the same time an approximation of levels. The biggest decrease of specific rates up to 2005 was recorded among women aged 20–29.

The structure of abortions by marital status has shown a trend towards a continuous decrease in the proportion of married women having abortions and conversely an increase in the proportion of single women. The distribution of abortions by order is changing. The proportion of first-order abortions is increasing and the proportion of repeat abortions is decreasing. Nevertheless, the biggest proportion of repeat abortions is still, as at the start of the 1990s, registered among married women.

Mortality (Boris Burcin), pp. 50–60

The year 2006 was the twentieth year that saw a gradual improvement in the mortality characteristics of the population of the Czech Republic, a trend that began in 1987. These changes have not been homogeneous over time, and they mainly accelerated after 1990 in connection with the onset of far-reaching socio-economic changes in society, which were reflected also in a gradual improvement in the state of health of the population.

In 2006, life expectancy at birth, as a synthetic indicator of the mortality rate, reached historically high levels – at 73.5 years for men and 79.7 years for women, which means an extension of average
life expectancy since 1990 by 5.9 and 4.3 years. In the past two decades the Czech Republic has been one of the countries with the fastest growing life expectancy – the average annual increase of this indicator between 1990 and 2005 (when comparable international data are available) was as much as 0.36 years for men and 0.25 years for women. The trend gradually brings us closer to the more advanced countries – the number of years men lagged behind was reduced from 5.3 years in 1990 to 4.0 years in 2005, and for women the figures were 3.9 and 3.1 years.

Changes to mortality intensity were not homogenous across age groups. One of the biggest decreases in mortality intensity in the period under observation occurred among male and female infants – falling to roughly one-third its level in 1990. In terms of its infant mortality rate the Czech Republic ranks as one of the most advanced countries in the world (in 2006 the quotient of infant mortality for males and females reached 3.3 ‰), which is a result primarily of the high standard of prenatal and neonatal medical care available. Positive changes to the mortality rate occurred in all age groups. Alongside the first year of life, another change that was of key significance for prolonging life expectancy at birth was the decline in mortality intensity among men over the age of 30 and women over the age of 40. Among men, the decline in mortality intensity by age was, with just some exceptions, somewhat bigger than that of women, which corresponds to the fact that the trend in men’s mortality lagged considerably further behind before 1990. In terms of the potential for further reduction of mortality of the Czech population, the biggest reserves are mainly among middle aged men, among whom the mortality intensity is roughly double the intensity in advanced countries.

From the total increase in life expectancy in 1990–2006 of 5.9 years, 4.5 of the years applied to the 40–84 year-old age span, which in relative terms made up 76% of the increase. Among women the situation was similar – the decline in mortality intensity among women aged 45–89 accounted for 3.3 years of the total increase in life expectancy of 4.3 years, which equals 77% of the total improvement in mortality. A decline in the infant mortality rate also contributed to reducing the total mortality intensity in the period under observation. Among men it brought about an increase in life expectancy at birth of 0.6 years and among women of 0.5 years, that is, in both cases roughly 10% of the total increase in average life expectancy.

The differences in the changes in terms of the trends of the rate and structure of mortality by gender mean that the parameters of the excess mortality of men have changed over the course of the past twenty years. Excess mortality of men, measured as the difference in the values of life expectancy at birth for men and women, decreased between 1990 and 2006 from 7.8 to 6.2 years, which corresponds to the trend of the approximation of the life expectancies of men and women occurring in advanced countries, but it is still more of an excess value.

A breakdown of deaths by cause of death shows a decrease in the percentage of deaths from cardiovascular diseases from 56.0% to 50.3% and an increase in the percentage of deaths from cancers, which in 2006 accounted for 27.0% of deaths (up from 22.0% in 1990), so that the proportion of deaths from the two major causes of death remained almost unchanged over the past two decades – accounting for more than 75% of deaths. Among other cause-of-death categories no significant changes occurred. The significant improvement in mortality conditions in the period under observation was mainly related to a reduction of mortality intensity connected with cardiovascular diseases. The standardised mortality rate for this disease category fell between 1990 and 2006 by 43% among men and by 38% among women. When regard to the internal structure of this disease category, the change mainly stemmed from a reduction of the mortality intensity connected with heart attack and stroke, where a decrease was recorded among both men and women at an interval of 30–70%. Mortality intensity related to the second most common cause of death category, cancers, decreased among men by 21% and among women by 14%. One of the most significant decreases in mortality occurred in connection with malignant stomach cancer, colorectal cancer, and among men also malignant oesophageal, bronchial, and lung cancer. Conversely, among women, the opposite trend was observed, probably in connection with the growing number of women smoking at an older age. With regard to external causes of death, among both genders there was a reduction of mortality from suicide and from traffic accidents.

The reduction in cardiovascular diseases made the biggest contribution to the significant increase in life expectancy at birth between 1990 and 2006, owing to their high intensity and the rate of reduction achieved. The absolute contribution of this cause of death category was 3.08 years among men and 2.50 years among women, which in relative terms is 53% and 59% respectively. The second most significant contribution (leaving aside a very heterogeneous group of other non-specific causes of death) to extending life expectancy – at 0.97 years for men and 0.53 years for women, i.e. 17% and 13%, respectively – was recorded in the cancer category. External causes accounted for
roughly ten percent of the extension of life expectancy at birth. Other causes of death had no substantial effect on extending the average life expectancy of the Czech population. Excess male mortality was observed in all the causes of death analysed. The biggest contribution to decreasing the difference between the life expectancy at birth of men and women was the decrease in the mortality intensity connected with cardiovascular diseases.

The average life expectancy of the population of the Czech Republic increased in the past twenty years by 5.1 years (the average for men and women together), which out of all the post-communist countries brings the Czech Republic closest to life expectancy in the most advanced countries. At the same time, if the country maintains its current pace of approaching measures in advanced countries continues, equivalent levels of mortality characteristics should be reached around the year 2030.

Migration (Dagmar Bartoňová) pp. 60–70

Since 1991 the Czech Republic has become a country of migrational gain, where, alongside the increased migrational activities of the citizens of the Czech Republic, the influx of foreign nationals has gradually increased. Increased migration involved not just re-emigration but initially also more emigration, and in 1992 migration also increased in connection with the division of Czechoslovakia. The number of foreigners in the Czech Republic grew more than fourfold in 1993–2006, so that by the end of 2006 there were more than 323 000 foreign nationals living in the country (including 1887 granted asylum); thus, for every 1000 citizens there were 31 foreigners. Of these more than 296 000 foreigners (after deducting foreigners with temporary residential visas over 90 days) were included in the population of the Czech Republic, so that in 2006 foreigners made up 2.6% of the population. Since the 2001 population census, which for the first time included foreigners with long-term residency status, the proportion of foreigners increased fourfold. In comparison with other European countries, however, the Czech Republic is still among the countries with a small percentage of foreigners.

A time series of increases in the number of foreign migrants shows evident fluctuations, mainly caused by changes to the legislation that applies to the residence of foreigners in the country. The current forms of residence status permitting foreigners to reside in the Czech Republic, permanently or temporarily, or on the basis of asylum, were established in legislation that was introduced in 1999 and amended in 2002 in connection with EU accession.

In 2006, 68 200 people moved to the Czech Republic, and almost 33 500 people moved out. Migration mobility was somewhat higher than in the preceding year, but net migration decreased slightly. Numerically the largest group of migrants to the Czech Republic are Ukrainians; in 2006 net migration (from Ukraine) was almost 13 000 people; this was followed at some distance by migration from Slovakia, Vietnam, and Russia.

Ukrainians dominate the structure of the population of foreign nationals living in the Czech Republic and make up almost one-third of all foreigners, followed at some distance by Slovaks (18%) and Vietnamese (13%), and there are also considerably large groups of citizens from Poland and Russia. Ukrainians and Slovaks for the most part have temporary residence status, while permanent residence is more often held by foreigners from Vietnam and Poland.

The age structure of foreigners indicates that the majority of them come to the Czech Republic at a productive age for the purpose of work or study, and most often they are people aged 20–45; those foreigners who start a family in the Czech Republic tend to be foreigners with permanent residence status. The gender structure of foreigners is entirely deformed; almost twice as many men as women were recorded among foreigners between the ages of 35 and 50.

The distribution of foreigners residing in the Czech Republic is territorially uneven. They are concentrated mainly in large towns and in the border regions of Northern and Western Bohemia. Almost one-half (147 000) live in Prague and in the Central Bohemia region.

Families and Households (Dagmar Bartoňová) pp. 70–80.

The composition of census households, especially family households, changed radically at the end of the 20th century, as the effects of the new regime of demographic behaviour especially affecting the young generation reaching reproductive age have begun to be felt. The changes became more evident in the data on the number and structure of families and households in the 2001 population census.
Household structures have most reflected the overall decrease in the marriage and fertility rates, further amplified by the shift of the intensity of these two processes to a later age, which primarily meant a decrease in the number and a reduction in the proportion of two-parent family households with children in the youngest age groups. An increase in the intensity of divorce, the spread of consensual unions, and other changes in social behaviour, along with a decrease in the mortality rate, especially among older men, contributed to an increase in the proportion of households of individuals, lone-parent family households, and couple households without dependent children. However, the internal structure of households also changed as a result of the effects of irregularities in the age structure of the adult population.

The total increase of 220,000 census households conceals important changes relating to the individuals living in family households and a continuing process of individualisation of private life. The reduction of marriage intensity and at the same time its shift to a later age, and the process of adult children born in the 1970s leaving the homes of older people resulted in a reduction in the number of couple households with dependent children by 305,000 and their proportion of the population decreased to one-quarter of the total number of census households. At the same time, the proportion of couple households without dependent children increased to 30% of all households. The decrease in the proportion of couple households overall was not even compensated by the increase in the number of consensual union households (by almost one-half), as they still constitute just a fraction of all couple households (5.4%). However, couple households as a whole remained the most widespread type of census household at the start of the 21st century, accounting for 55% of households, in which the majority of the population (7.3 million people) continues to live.

There was a relatively high increase of single-parent households with dependent and non-dependent children, owing to the consistently high divorce rate and the growing number of children born outside marriage; in 2001 they made up 13.5% of census households. As in previous decades, in the 1990s households of individuals increased significantly (30%), but they underwent profound structural changes, mainly affected by a growing proportion of individuals living alone at a younger age and a reduction in the proportion of women over the age of 65 living alone. This development has contributed to the reduction of the average size of census households – from 2.53 to 2.38 in 2001. Owing to the fall in the fertility rate and the continuing “atomisation” of households the average size of households with two or more persons has fallen from 3.09 to 2.97 members.

Although in the 1990s the number of households of individuals continued to grow, the proportion of households in which a person genuinely lived alone decreased slightly – in 2001 three-quarters of households of individuals lived alone. However, almost 90% of the individuals aged 70 and over lived alone, which represented more than 330,000 people, of whom 80% were women, mostly widows. As the expected acceleration of population ageing occurs, there will be an increasing proportion of households of individuals, and especially households of elderly people. Median estimates forecasting an increase in the number of households of individuals from 1.276 million in 2001 to 1.530 million in 2020, of which those with individuals aged 70 and over will rise from 374,000 to 544,000 in 2020. Given the ageing trend reconstruction of the health and social systems seems especially urgent, not just from an institutional perspective but also from the socio-cultural perspective.

The Birth Rate in the Czech Republic: Current and Recent Trends (Jitka Rychtaříková) pp. 80–95

Since the start of the 1990s the Czech Republic has undergone historically unprecedented demographic changes, among the most significant of which are changes related to fertility. The current decline in the fertility rate to a level well below simple population replacement is creating negative population growth, leading in turn to rapid demographic ageing and the start of a downward population spiral, which means that smaller birth cohorts give birth to even fewer children, gradually giving rise to successively smaller generations. The number of live born children fell considerably from the usual 130,000 to the current number of 100,000 live births (2006: 105,831). The lowest number of live born children (89,471) was recorded in 1999. Up to and including 1991 the average number of live born children per woman of reproductive age (total fertility) was 1.9, but between 1995 and 2005 total fertility was lower than 1.3. An absolute low of 1.13 was reached in 1999. The most recent known figure, from 2006, was 1.33 live born children per one woman of reproductive age. The average age of mothers at the time of birth of their first child grew to 26.9 years of age in 2006. Since 1998 the highest fertility rate has been recorded among women aged 25–29, unlike the previous, post-war period, when the highest fertility was observed among women in the 20–24 age group. Nevertheless, the current intensity of fertility among older age groups comes nowhere near to compensating for
the decrease in fertility in the age group of people aged 24 and under. In the 1990s total first-order and second-order fertility has also decreased substantially, which signifies a hypothetical increase in childlessness (calculated transversally) to 34% in 2006. In Czech society, women with the highest education are still most often childless and on average have fewer children. First-order and second-order children still make up 84–86% of all live births in the Czech Republic. Higher-order children make up only the remaining 15%. The percentage of children born outside a marriage rose from 7.4 in 1986 to 33.3 in 2006. Given the very substantial increase in the number of children born to single mothers, between 1986 and 2006 the percentage of children born to single mothers out of children born outside marriage also grew, from 69% to 80%. Single mothers thus far tend to be younger at the time of their first child and tend more often to be giving birth to first-order children compared to married mothers. Single mothers are most often young women with basic education, while the higher the level of a woman’s education the less common single motherhood is. During the 1990s the incidence of pre-marital conception (the percentage of first-order children born into a marriage conceived prior to marriage out of the total number of first-order children born into marriage) fell continuously to 32% in 2006. The highest rates of first-order children conceived pre-maritally are observed among young women with lower education. Since the middle of the 1990s the frequency of multiple deliveries among older women and as first-order births grew in connection with the increased use of assisted reproduction methods.

Indicators of generational fertility combined with the mother’s age at the time of birth illustrate that, up until the generation of women born in 1960, a demographic regime of very stable fertility at a level of simple population replacement prevailed in the Czech Republic, while childbearing was heavily concentrated within a narrow age span, with maximum fertility in the 20-24 age group, and almost completed fertility by the age of 35. The age profile of every generation of women born since 1960 has grown farther away from the pattern of simple population replacement, first by shifting fertility to a later age, and among the youngest generations with the lowest fertility rates already emerging in the youngest age groups.

The changes begun in the 1990s were connected with the socio-economic transformation, wherein, compared to the past, support for families with children has in practical terms been curtailed. Financial benefits in particular lost their real value in family budgets. Housing became financially difficult to acquire; the new phenomenon of unemployment ushered in a sense of insecurity; and the number of pre-school facilities was reduced, especially those for very small children. What is becoming the biggest problem for women today is combining parenthood with a professional career. The mass spread of contraception has made it possible to plan the number of children to have and when to have them. The opportunities young people have to study and travel have grown. All this has contributed to the fact that a considerably smaller percentage of young people marry than in the past; independent lifestyles are becoming more common, and this is being reflected in a reduction in the fertility intensity indicators among women. The 1990s and the early years of the new millennium can therefore be described as a period when many new opportunities arose, but also as one that, compared to the past, was marked by a number of reductions and especially by the transition to a different procreation model, which is still findings its ultimate form.

The Population Climate and Family Policy (Jiřina Kocourková) pp. 95–100

Since the start of the 1990s the population climate in the Czech Republic has been fundamentally transformed. The biggest reflection of this change has been the decline in marriage intensity and fertility intensity well below the level of simple population replacement. At the start of the 1990s Czech society was strongly oriented towards marriage and characterised by a critical approach to new demographic trends. The growing proportion of children born outside marriage and thus living with just one parent, and the increasing proportion of children born to parents living in a consensual union, were evaluated as negative. Czech society has gradually become more tolerant of consensual unions and even of consensual unions with children.

Despite the sharp fall in total fertility, the declared reproductive plans of respondents have remained relatively high. Nevertheless, the high value accorded marriage and family in surveys is at odds with reality. A considerable number of young people are putting off starting a family, and it can therefore be expected that there will be an increase in the proportion of people who will have just one child or will remain childless and not start a family at all. A characteristic feature of trends to date has been the continuous slackening of the relationship between marriage and procreative behaviour. Women who want children are increasingly more often having them without marrying.
The Czech Republic ranks among the countries where there is a big difference between the number of children people wish to have and the number they really have. To what extent does this reflect the marginal attention the living conditions of families have received in the past decade from the Czech government? The results of the survey suggest that if appropriate measures were taken young people would be able to realise their reproductive plans.

At the start of the 1990s family policy was shifted to the margins of political interest in the Czech Republic. It was only when the Social Democrats came into power in 1998 that an effort emerged to address the issue of low fertility, which resulted in the introduction of a number of relevant measures. Attention focused especially on increasing the benefits targeting families with children and improving the conditions of parental leave. In 2006 the new liberal-democratic government declared a change in the state’s approach to supporting families with children. Although the newly adopted reforms coming into effect on 1 January 2008 contain some positive elements, for example, a more flexible system of parental leave and increased support for childcare services for young children, the changes affect a variety of measures and may be negatively perceived by the public. It will be possible to expect a deterioration of the population climate and a halt to the increase in total fertility that began in the Czech Republic in 2004.