The changing landscape of pre-election surveys in the Czech Republic

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Content of the presentation

- Two things that have been changing in recent years:
  - A **self-regulatory organization** promotes professional standards and principles for **the publication of election survey results**
  - The changes in the **mode** of data collection

Elections in the Czech Republic

- General elections (to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic) are held once every four years, and the most attention from pollsters is paid to these elections.

- Most polling companies focus on these elections not only in the pre-election period. The support for political parties is measured throughout the inter-election period.

- For presidential elections, which are two-round elections, there is less coverage (for different reasons).

- The last elections for the lower house of parliament were held on 8-9 October 2021, the previous were on 20-21 October 2017

- Voter turnout: 65.43 % in 2021 (60.84% in 2017)

- There is usually a **large number of political parties running**; in the last election in 2021 there were **22** entities - 22 political parties or coalitions; in 2017 there were **31** political parties

- The **electoral threshold is 5%** (a minimum percentage of votes a political party must receive)

- There is **a ban on the publication of opinion polls** 3 days before the elections and on both election days.

How many agencies conduct pre-election surveys?

- There are several polling companies that regularly publish the results of pre-election surveys a few months before the election (6 companies), or measure the support for political parties throughout the inter-election period (4 companies).

- Some are well-known multinational companies (Kantar, Ipsos), others are smaller companies operating mostly only in the Czech Republic (and Slovakia)

How pre-election surveys are financed

- Most publicly available results from pre-election surveys are **funded by the companies themselves**, and this has been the case in the past

- In the Czech Republic, it is not usual for pre-election surveys to be regularly commissioned by the media, which would link up with one of the firms (as we know it from the USA)

- However, there is one major commissioner and that's Czech Television, a public service broadcaster. Czech Television has long been working with the Kantar CZ and recently also with the DataCollect. This is due to replication of methodology (confirmation of Kantar CZ results) and also due to collection of larger samples.

- Before the 2021 elections, the situation has changed a bit: CNN Prima News (TV) commissioned 3 surveys; iDnes (newspapers) commissioned 1 survey

- A new phenomenon has emerged ahead of the 2021 election, the publication of a poll commissioned by a political party

Industry standards and a self-regulatory organization

- **A self-regulatory organization** SIMAR promotes professional standards and principles for the publication of election survey results
- SIMAR has a **working group for public opinion research**, which deals mainly with pre-election surveys and provides a platform for discussion between member and also non-member polling companies
- SIMAR created a **Public Opinion Research Passport**, which sets out all the information a company must provide when it publishes survey outputs
- The passport is a support for **communication with the media** (a protection from the fake surveys)

Public Opinion Research Passport

- **the name of the company that carried out the survey**
- contact details
- **the name of the company that commissioned the survey**
- **number of respondents**
- representativeness
- sampling method
- **mode of data collection**
- number of interviewers (for face-to-face interviews)
- **date of data collection**
- (commentary on events that may have influenced the results)
- *optional information:* data weighting (if used), wording of questions and order of questions (questionnaire), method of asking questions (e.g. with or without a show card, self-completion), number of sampling points, explanation of the construction of estimates for political parties

The biggest change the pre-election surveys has undergone - a change in mode

- In the **2017 elections**, **face-to-face** interviews dominated the data collection and **quota sampling** was mainly used; the only exception were the surveys from **Kantar CZ**, which were conducted by **telephone** and **probability sampling** (RDD) was used

- Currently there is much more variety in the data collection modes; there are two reasons for this:
  - some part of population are harder to reach in face-to-face interviews
  - the Covid-19 pandemic

- Shift to **online (opt-in)** and **telephone surveys**, but also to **mixed-mode** surveys (F2F+CAWI; CATI+CAWI; CAWI/CATI/CAPI)

- Current discussion about online surveys: 25% of people over 18 are not regular internet users (internet use correlates with age), age is also linked to turnout and voting behaviour (older people more likely to show up; they vote for different parties than younger people)

The models have different designs

- **Different procedures** are used to determine estimates of support for political parties

- What the models have in common:
  - **Estimate the probability of voter turnout**
  - **Ask whether the respondent is considering more than one party**
  - **Apply past vote weights**
  - **Apply additional weights**

- In addition to estimates for political parties which can be compared to election results (**models**), other outputs such as **preferences** (the representation of support for parties in the whole population, including non-voters, and the **electoral core** and **electoral potential** (see the presentation at the WAPOR conference) are published.

How accurate are the pre-election surveys in the Czech Republic (2017)?

	Collection date	Mean date of data collection	Mode	Sampling	Weights	N	Average absolute deviation
CVVM September	4. - 14. 9. 2017	9. 9. 2017	CAPI/PAPI	Quota	No weights	934	2.7 %
STEM a STEM/MARK (Nova)	24. 9. – 2. 10. 2017	28. 9. 2017	CAPI/PAPI	Quota	Past vote (2013)	1001	3.0 %
Median	26. 9. - 14. 10. 2017	5. 10. 2017	CAPI	Quota sampling in randomly selected districts	Age x education, work status, intensity of internet use, past vote (2013)	1081	2.3 %
Focus	3. - 10. 10. 2017	6. 10. 2017	CAPI	Quota	(Sex, age, education, settlement size) x region	999	3.0 %
Kantar CZ (ČT) (not published before the elections)	6. – 19. 10. 2017	12. 10. 2017	CATI	Probability	Sex x age, education, settlement size, region, past vote (2013)	2400	1.1 %
CVVM October (not published before the elections)	9. - 19. 10. 2017	14. 10. 2017	CAPI/PAPI	Quota	No weights	905	1.8 %

How accurate are the pre-election surveys in the Czech Republic (2017)?

- The inaccurate estimates in 2017 occurred in all F2F surveys that overestimated left-wing political parties

- We examined the role of time, the shy voter hypothesis, etc., but we concluded that **the survey mode was responsible for the systematic bias**

How accurate are the pre-election surveys in the Czech Republic (2021)?

	End date of data collection	Mode	Sampling	Weights	Average absolute deviation
STEM (CNN Prima News)	30.9.2021	CATI/CAWI	Quota	Yes	2.0 %
Median (iDnes)	29.9.2021	CAWI/CATI/CAPI	Quota	Work status, past vote 2017	2.2 %
Kantar CZ (ČT)	22.9.2021	CATI	Probability	Yes	2.1 %
Ipsos (Spolu)	12.9.2021	CAWI	Quota	Work status, income, past vote 2017	1.0 %
Data Collect (ČT)	8.9.2021	CATI	Probability	Yes	2.2 %
STEM (CNN Prima News)	8.9.2021	CATI/CAWI	Quota	Yes	2.8 %
Median	2.9.2021	CAPI/CAWI	Quota sampling in randomly selected districts	Age x education, age x settlement size, education x settlement size, work status, past vote (2017)	2.0 %
Kantar CZ (ČT)	13.8.2021	CATI	Probability	Yes	2.2 %

How accurate are the pre-election surveys in the Czech Republic (2021)?

- The inaccurate estimates in 2021 were mainly due to the underestimation of the winner of the election (the failure to correctly estimate the winner) and the overestimation of the Czech Pirate Party

- Possible reasons of the deviations from the election results:
  - Role of time (late-swing)
  - Overestimation of turnout for socio-demographic groups with lower turnout (e.g. young voters)
  - Weighting on the past vote
  - Differential turnout

Thank you!

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