



GLOBSEC

IDEAS SHAPING THE WORLD

GLOBSEC Trends 2022

Czechia

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Focus on Czechia

Czechia has long established itself as the most the Eurosceptic country in the region based on GLOBSEC Trends polling. Its support for the EU has fluctuated in any given year dependent on the economic climate and the crisis environment. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, that said, has served as a reality check for many Czechs. A sense of pragmatism and a recognition that the EU and NATO are security guarantors that provide the tools necessary for stronger joint actions have contributed to Czechia's newfound regional leader status. The public now expresses more favourable views towards Czechia's EU and NATO membership, the country's role as a driver of international cooperation and Prague's

advocacy for more stringent sanctions against Russia.

A change in the leadership of the country, which is now stridently Euro-Atlantic oriented, has been especially pertinent to shifting the country's rhetoric and policies. The change in the government led, furthermore, has contributed to an unprecedented rise in trust in institutions including the media. These changes, along with an escalation of the war by Russia, has compelled the Czech public to reevaluate the actors and issues they perceive as security threats.

This report, consequently, examines the key trends shaping Czech society in 2022. It explores the



socio-demographic groups steering the country's increasingly transatlantic orientation and rising trust levels and satisfaction with democracy.

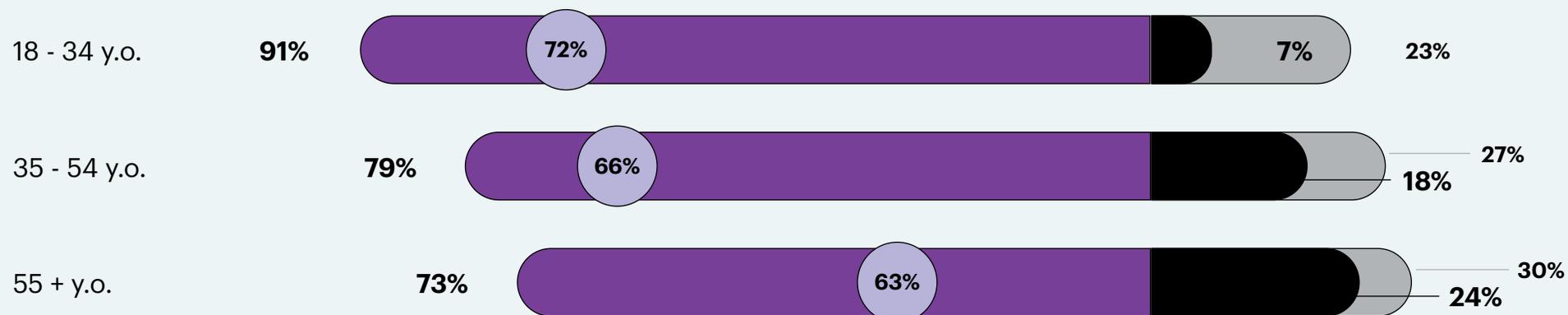
EU and NATO membership

Now, please imagine that next weekend a referendum were held in your country on its membership in the EU/NATO. How would you vote – for your country to stay in the EU/NATO or leave the EU/NATO?

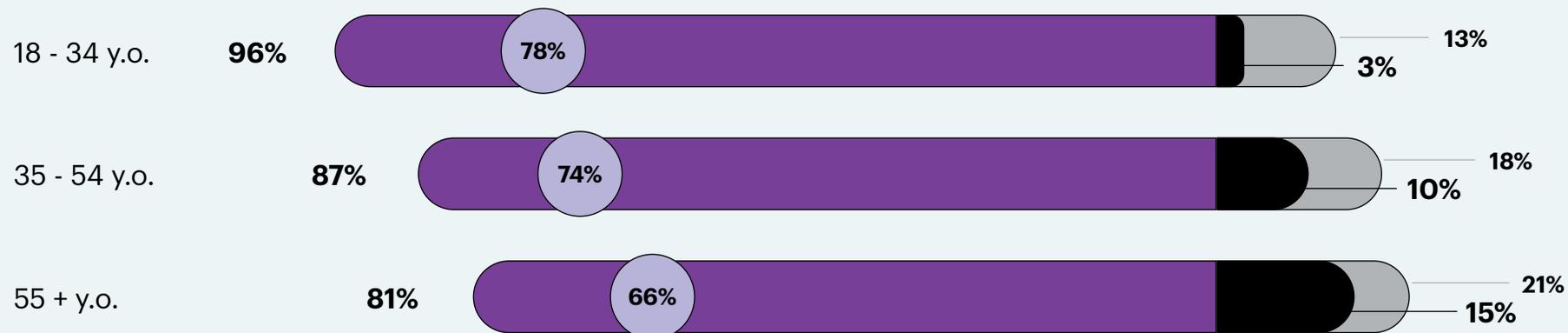
Stay 2022 Stay 2021

Leave 2022 Leave 2021

Support for membership in the EU



Support for NATO membership



Rising support

Russia's invasion of Ukraine reminded Czechs of the importance of EU and NATO membership. Support for staying in the EU in Czechia increased by 14 percentage points over the past year and now stands at 80%. A 15-percentage point increase in NATO membership backing means that 87% altogether back the country's membership in the organization. While support increased among all age groups, views vary by age and education. Younger and more educated respondents, notably, tend to be more pro-Western than older and less educated people.

While most Czechs embrace EU and NATO membership, the elderly and less educated distinctly represent vulnerable groups that could potentially be influenced by actors spreading anti-Western narratives. The differences in support for EU and NATO membership, respectively, stand at 23 and 18 percentage points between university educated adults and those with less education.

Germany and the United States perceived as strategic partners

The war in Ukraine affirmed the importance of strategic partnership with Germany and the United States. A total of 74% of respondents, the most in the region, perceive Germany as the most important strategic partner for Czechia, whereas 41% view the US similarly. Washington, nonetheless, has seen a 16-percentage point boost in these perceptions over the past year. Young people have particularly steered this movement - youth identification of the US and Germany as strategic partners climbed, respectively, by 22 and 14 percentage points.

A similar pattern is apparent between respondents from urban and rural settlements - urban dwellers now are more likely than last year to perceive both the United States and Germany as strategic partners.

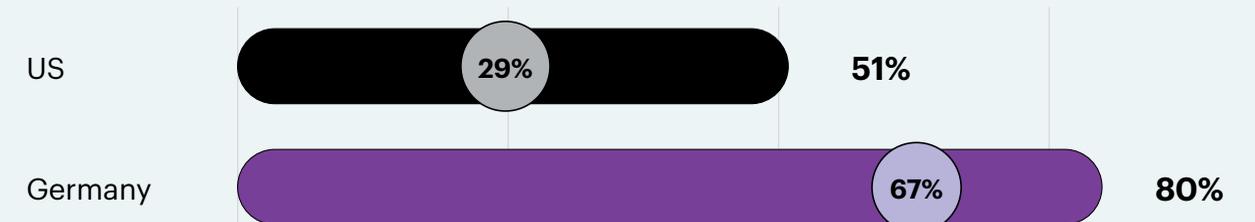
While only 6% of Czech perceive Russia as a strategic partner, supporters of anti-system and pro-Russian actors wage influence operations in the country, which include organisation of anti-government protest in August 2022 where Russia was labelled as Czechia's saviour from disintegration and annihilation.²



Which of the following global actors do you consider to be the most important strategic partners for your country? Pick max. 2 from available options: the United States, China, Germany, France, Russia and the United Kingdom.

Legend: 2021 (light purple), 2022 (dark purple)

18 - 34 y.o.



35 - 54 y.o.



55 + y.o.



Trust in institutions underpins sense of security

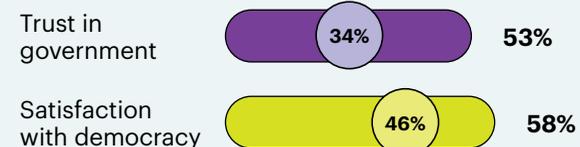
Czechia enjoys, at 63%, the greatest government trust levels in the region. It is one of only three CEE countries where a majority trust their government. The current Czech government, which came to power in fall 2021, has managed to achieve a 31-percentage point swing in government trust levels. The change in leadership also coincides with increased satisfaction with how democracy works in the country – this figure surged by 21 percentage points over the last year. It is important to acknowledge, however, that young people and the university educated have been integral to these shifts. The two demographic groups also happen to comprise the core electorates of the new coalition parties³. An overwhelming 76% of young people (those aged 18-35) now trust the government, a 55-percentage point increase from 2021.

63%
of Czechs
trust their
government.

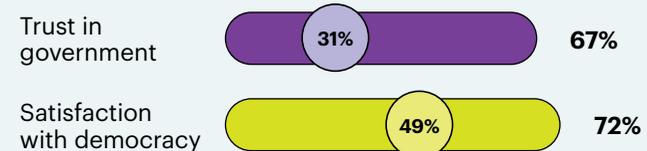
Trust in government and satisfaction with how democracy works in Czechia based on the education level of respondents.

2021 2022

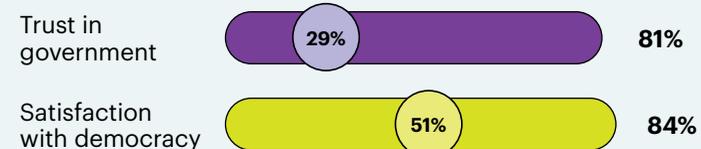
Lower



Secondary with school leaving exam



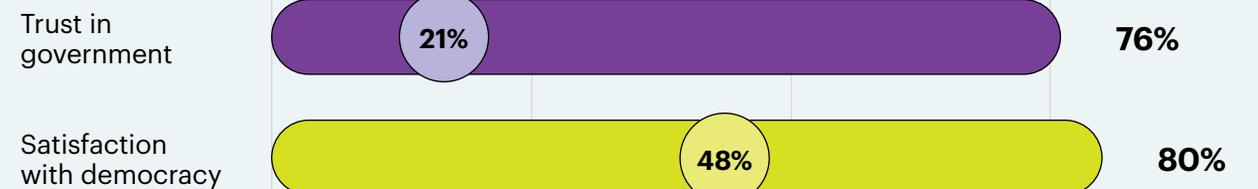
University



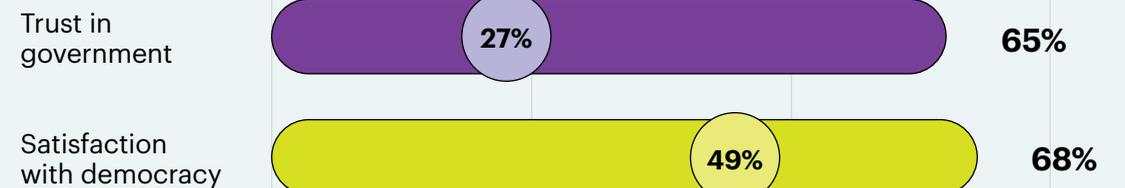
How much do you personally trust or distrust national government in your country? and If you take all circumstances into account, to what extent are you overall satisfied with how democracy works in your country?

2021 2022

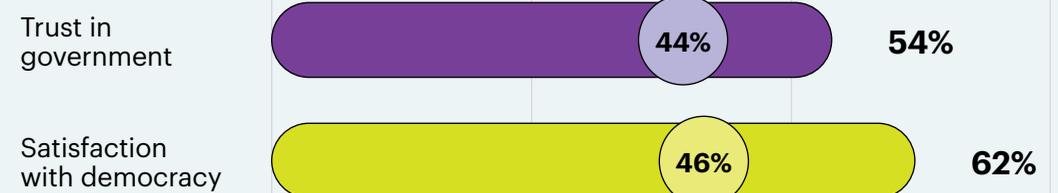
18 - 34 y.o.



35 - 54 y.o.



55 + y.o.



0% 25% 50% 75%

Clearer understanding of the enemy

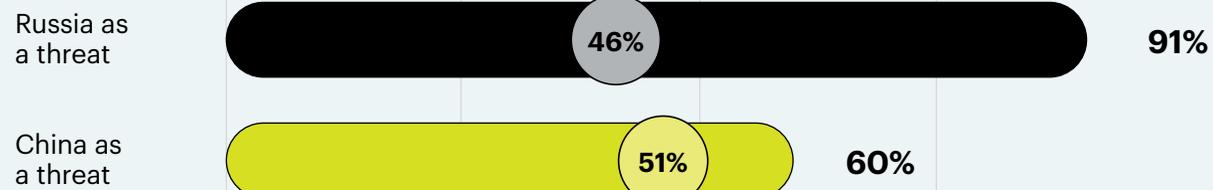
The Russian invasion of Ukraine helped many Czechs firm up their beliefs regarding their perceived enemies.

Now 84% identify Russia as a security threat and 51% similarly perceive China this way. Older respondents and those with less education, meanwhile, are less likely than their younger and more educated peers to identify Russia and/or China as threats. For comparison, only 15% of respondents perceive the US as a threat.

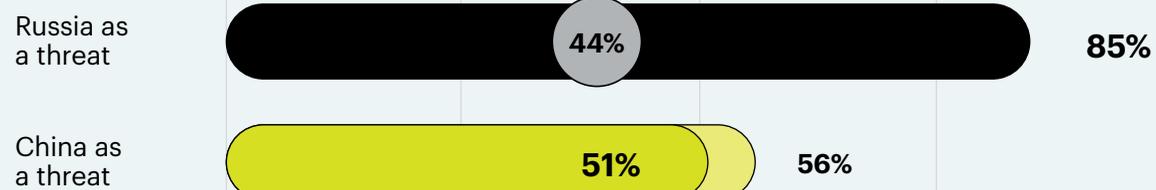
Do you think the following countries present a security threat to your country?

2021 2022

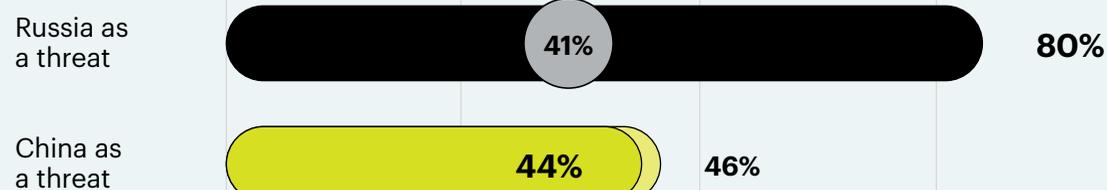
18 - 34 y.o.



35 - 54 y.o.



55 + y.o.



Women more circumspect

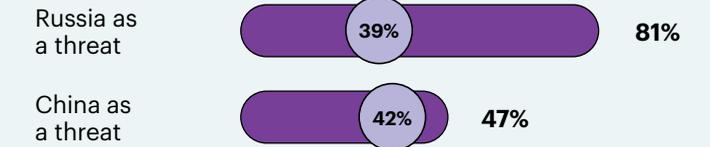
Gender divisions are present too - women generally are more likely than men to recognize Russia and China as threats.

The increased trust levels in institutions and shifts in security threat perceptions have bolstered the information space. Fewer respondents now believe various disinformation narratives about alleged threats, in particular, about the EU and migrants. The belief that migrants threaten Czech identity and values dropped by 40 percentage points from 2020. Both alleged threats, nevertheless, still resonate among many older people and those with less education. While 39% of less educated respondents perceive migrants as a threat, only 16% of university educated Czechs think the same.

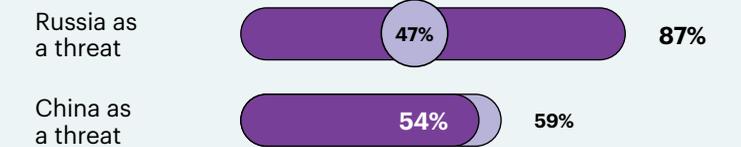
Perceptions of threat based on gender

2021 2022

Men



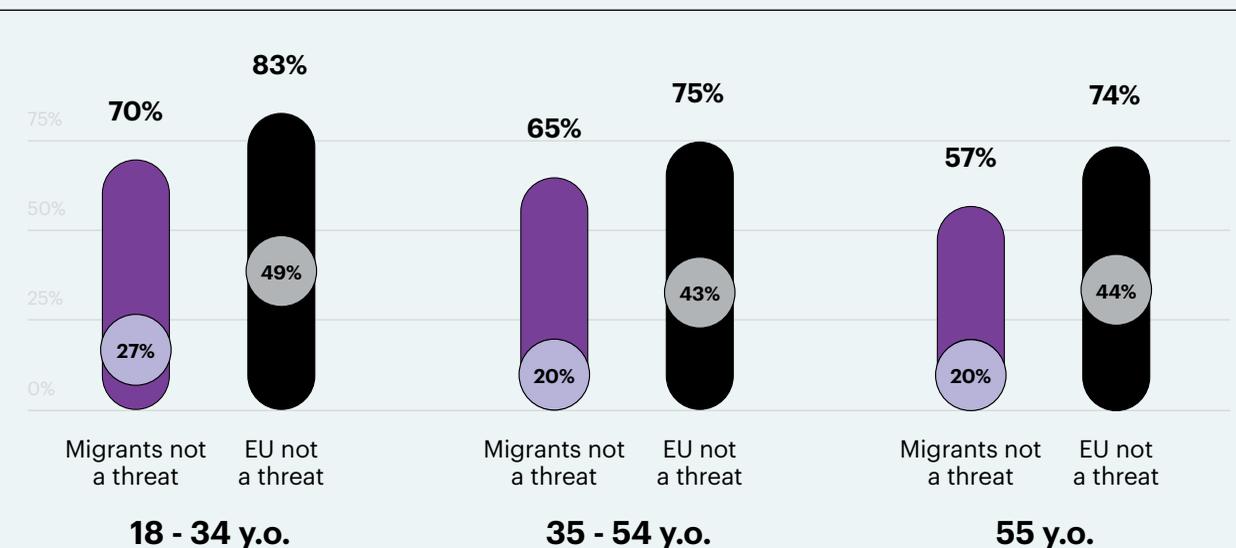
Women



Some people claim that there are certain groups of people and countries that threaten our own identity and values. Do you personally think any of the following groups or countries threaten your identity and values or not? Please evaluate each group/country separately.

Responses for the EU and migrants.

2021 2022



Recommendations

① Utilise increased support for the EU.

With support for the EU and NATO soaring, this momentum should be seized and further bolstered through sustained communication campaigns. The emphasis should be placed on the advantages of EU membership for Czechia's security and economic prosperity.

② Employ Czech EU presidency to support EU membership and resilience-building policies.

The presidency of the EU Council is an ideal opportunity to show that small countries can lead the EU and that their voice matters. Czechia's presidency also provides an opportunity to press for stronger EU-wide resilience-building policies against malign influence operations, especially vis-à-vis China. Czechia, in fact, has stood out as one of the EU's leaders on Beijing and societal awareness is robust herein.

③ Domestic policies are as important as united international support for Ukraine.

Anti-government protests that were organised, among others, by people with connections to the Kremlin underscore the fact that domestic politics poses a parallel battlefield for the war in Ukraine. Addressing domestic issues and social policies are as important as maintaining a united foreign policy front and support for Ukraine.

④ Drive whole-of-government strategic communication.

The efficient exchange of information and presenting a united voice are important elements to building societal resilience against malign influence operations. Effective strategic communication about, for example, planned measures and the unfolding of influence operations in the country leads to better informed and more resilient societies. Given that government in Czechia enjoys greater trust among younger and well-educated people, it is important to engage local influencers with a reach beyond the government's ordinary constituencies.

⑤ Utilise the increased presence of Allies in the region.

The increased presence of international forces in the region and the engagement of Czech soldiers in international battlegroups should be used to showcase the added value of cooperation and the Alliance through, for example, the sharing of personal stories and engagements with public.

⑥ Lead by example.

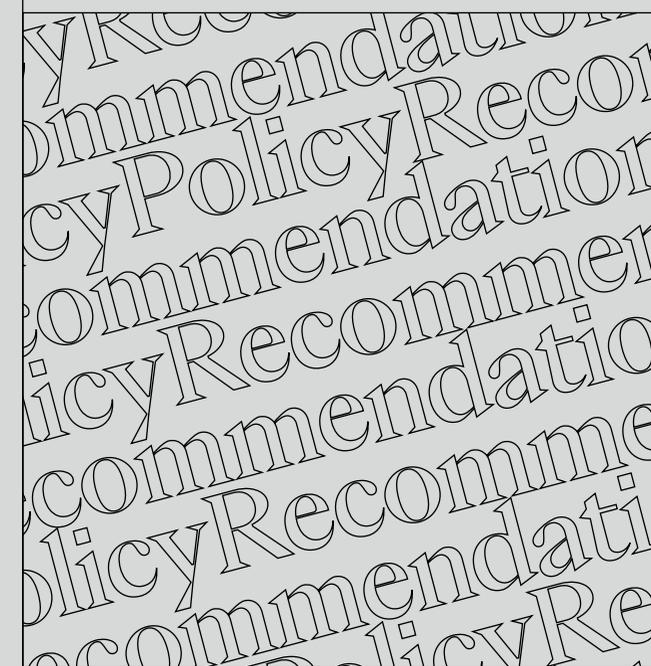
While populist rhetoric and smear campaigns against political opponents are a common part of electoral campaigns, such tactics further polarise society. Political officials should abstain from spreading disinformation and using the threat of "others" and rather lead by example by not using such tools and rhetoric.

⑦ Focus on the elderly and the less educated.

Older generations and people with less education are among the most vulnerable to various disinformation narratives and malign influence operations. Life-long learning programmes focused on building digital skills and developing critical thinking should receive sustained funding. Older Czechs tend to be also less pro-Western than younger people. People-to-people events in regions fostering open debates on various topics between different generations and societal groups, therefore, could also lead to better interpersonal trust and decreased polarisation.

⑧ Engage in outreach with men by meeting them where they are and through relevant influencers.

As men tend to perceive both Russia and China less as a threat, more explanatory campaigns should be targeted at men via channels and sources of news consumed by this group (e.g. sports commentators and professional athletes, representatives of military and security forces, sports shows/channels on television, etc.).



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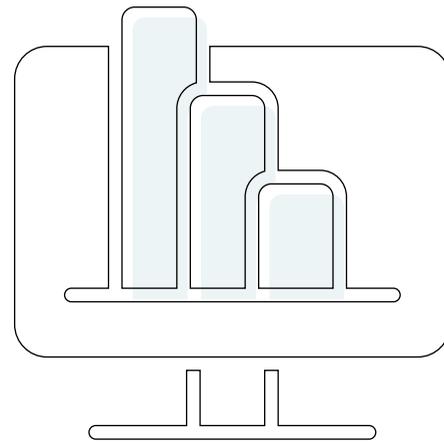
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Methodology

The outcomes and findings of this report are based on public opinion poll surveys carried out in March 2022 on a representative sample of the population in nine countries: Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. The surveys were conducted on a sample of 1000 respondents per country (9,000 respondents altogether) using stratified multistage random sampling in the form of computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). In all countries, the profiles of the respondents were representative of the country according to gender, age, education, place of residence and size of settlement. For the purposes of graphical data visualisation, the results were rounded to full numbers. To improve the readers' experience, the responses in closed questions with a scale were generalised. For example, a question with options definitely agree/ rather agree/ rather disagree /definitely disagree was merged to agree / disagree. The opinion polling in Czechia was conducted by STEM and coordinated by FOCUS, s.r.o. agency and the comparative results were published in May 2022 as **GLOBSEC Trends 2022**. The results have been compared to polls conducted with the use of consistent methodology since 2020.

References

- 1 <https://www.stem.cz/cesko-ma-byt-bezpecne-a-prosperujici-nase-clenstvi-v-eu-pak-muze-byt-opodstatneno-dosahovanim-prave-teto-vize/>
- 2 <https://mailchi.mp/globsec/democracyandresilience58-724548?e=75e65450a4>
- 3 <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/specialy/volby-do-snemovny/3383644-analyza-spolu-pomohly-vysoke-zisky-v-praze-ano-uspelo-v-obcich-s>
- 4 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/04/czech-republic-prague-protest-sanctions-energy-crisis-gas-russia>



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