



PILIETINĖS VISUOMENĖS INSTITUTAS

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DIFFERENT CIVIC POWER OF YOUTH

In 2010 the Lithuanian civic empowerment index survey was done for the fourth time. In previous surveys besides representational poll of Lithuanian citizens, the representational poll of country's teachers was being done as well, which allowed to compare how the civic empowerment of teachers differed from the civic empowerment of the whole society. This year more emphasis was put on the Lithuanian youth's civic engagement and attitude. Civic empowerment of young people (15 – 29 years old) who grew up in an independent Lithuanian state was compared with the civic empowerment of the older citizens.

Representative citizens' survey in 2010 was ordered by Civil Society Institute and conducted by public opinion and market research center „Vilmorus“. The study was supported by the Ministry of Education.

According to the data from 2010, Lithuanian youth has slightly more civic empowerment than an average Lithuanian citizen: youth's civic empowerment index score is 38.9, while the rest of the society's – 35.5 out of 100.

The same civic engagement coverage, different in nature of activity

In the civic engagement area, Lithuanian youth differs from all other citizens not in the coverage of engagement in civic activities, but in its nature.

Three activities, which are the most popular among Lithuanian citizens are subscription to charity (56 per cent), engagement in environment cleaning gatherings (50 per cent), and engagement in the activities of local community (34 per cent). These activities are the most popular among young citizens as well but slightly less popular than in the whole society: 48 per cent of young people contribute to charity, 45 per cent participate in environment cleaning gatherings, and 26 per cent are engaged in local community activities. On the other hand, bigger part of young Lithuanians are engaged in civic activities based on new information technology use (13 per cent) or chooses consumption goods, bearing in mind political and ethical motives (14 per cent) rather than other people in the society (respectively 8 and 10 per cent).

The nature of the civic engagement among young people changes when they complete higher education and become more economically independent. This is revealed by the comparison of the civic engagement between 15-19 year old and 20-29 year old people groups.

First, school-age young people comparing with the ones who already finished secondary education are more active in such activities as environment cleaning gatherings, community activities or social activities held by the religious communities. People from this age group are also more engaged in activities of civic organizations and movements.

Second, there are some activities that in the age group of 15-19 years old are non-existent or almost non-existent. These include addressing to a politician, law and law enforcement institutions when trying to defend a collective interest issue or engagement in political parties' activities. Such activities appear only in the older age group (20-29 years old).

Third, 20-29 years old group, which include more working people, is more active in activities which depend on person's financial independence: for example, consumption based on political and ethical motives or contributing to charity.

More civic potential to the community's activities, more trust in citizens' power to influence decisions

When asked how they would behave if a local problem (for example, it was intended to build a hazardous waste treatment plant or to set up a scrapheap nearby one's residence and so on) emerged for them and their closest people, young people often told that they would organize activities to settle these issues up (31 per cent). The percentage of such people in the whole society was smaller (22 per cent).

Young people are also more optimistic than the older ones about the power of ordinary citizens to influence decision-making process. This can be shown by comparing the civic influence understanding index scores in the two age groups. The civic influence understanding index shows how much power, in respondents' opinion, they or other ordinary citizens, public organizations and communities have on influencing important decisions. The average score of this index in the young people's group is 56.5 while the average score of the whole society is 47.0 out of 100.

Little interest in public affairs, little political sophistication

Lithuanian youth shows less interest in state politics than the whole society: 5 out of 10 young people are following the news comparing with the 7 out of 10 in the whole society.

In 2010 political sophistication was measured for the first time in the civic empowerment survey. Five questions about Lithuanian political system were given to the respondents in the survey. The majority of Lithuanian citizens (85 per cent) is aware who is the Parliament speaker and which institution has the right to decide if the law correspond to the Constitution (75 per cent). Citizens know less about state's political parties: on one hand, many people does not know which party won the latest elections to the Parliament, on the other hand, almost the same percentage of people cannot answer whether this party belongs to the left or to the right (there are respectively 60 and 57 per cent of people who can answer these questions correctly). Only one third of the population is aware on what majority

the Parliament may pass the law which was turned down by the President for more consideration. 13 per cent of respondents are able to answer all five political sophistication questions.

Young Lithuanian people are less politically sophisticated than the older ones: only 4 young people out of 10 can name the party which won the latest election to the Parliament and correctly answer whether it belongs to the political right or left. 14 per cent of young people are able to answer 4 out of 5 questions correctly compared with the 18 per cent of those who answered 4 out of 5 questions correctly in the whole society.

Lithuanian society's civic empowerment has been growing for the last four years

In 2010 the average score of the Lithuanian society's civic empowerment index (CEI) was 35.5 out of 100 possible. It shows that people's civic empowerment in our state remains poor, however...

Comparing results from 2010 with the ones got in the previous surveys, it is seen that during four years civic empowerment in Lithuania, even though slightly, but has been constantly increasing. Analysis of the dynamics in the separate civic empowerment dimensions shows that the biggest growth occurred in the civic engagement index: during four years, population's activities have increased from 27.4 to 37.8 out of 100 possible. More active involvement in activities can also strengthen people's trust in themselves and make believe that ordinary citizens can also influence important decisions. On the other hand, the social environment, which surrounds people in civic activities, remains not very friendly for socially active people: people consider that socially active person in our society might suffer different personal harm caused by the initiation of or participation in civic activities.