



LITHUANIAN CIVIC EMPOWERMENT INDEX 2016: MAIN RESULTS

According to the results from a representative societal survey carried out in December of 2016, calculated Civic Empowerment Index rose by 3.6 points and reached 37.0 points mark (Index average in 2015 was 33.4). This change was mostly due to growth in one of the component parts of the index – Civic influence perception in society - that increased by 10.5 points and reached 55.2 points (Index average in 2015 was 44.7)

Similar growth in Civic perception of influence in the last decade has been observed only in 2013 (up to 52.1 points) and was linked to the massive public activation campaign in context of “land sale” issue and 300 000 signatures collected to initiate the referendum on this issue. In 2016, the citizens’ belief in personal, community-based organizations and communities, entrepreneurs and the media’s influence on state decisions was most significant (0.74, 0.67, 0.63 and 0.51 point change respectively). Even though in 2016 civil influence perception index averages increased in all age groups, the perception of the influence of younger people increased even more than among the elderly: influence index in the 60-75 age group increased by 8.1 points, 50-59 age group – 7.7, 40-49 yrs. – 7.0, 30-39 – 10.5, and in the age group of 15-29 years it increased one and a half times more than among the elderly people – 13.6 points.

However, the sustainability of such an increase in Civic Empowerment Index should be questioned, because apart from the growth in civic influence perception, which might be connected to the results of 2016 Parliament elections, other index components – actual and potential political activity, political activity risk estimation – hardly changed in 2016. Compared to 2015, Lithuanian citizens were more active in participating in a public or civic campaigns (8% compared to 5% in 2015), purchased (11% compared to 8% in 2015) or boycotted (12% compared to 9% in 2015) products from a country or firm for ethical (moral) or political motives. Citizens were less active in environment cleaning activities (37% compared to 41% in 2015) and signed less non-online petitions (7% compared to 11% in 2015). As in previous years, out of 19 activities in the research, citizens most actively engaged in giving to the charity (42%), environment cleaning activities (37%) and participating in local community practices (27%).

Due to increased sample size in respondents aged 15-29 years, the study estimates that 2016 youth civic power index average is 42,5 – that’s 5,5 points higher than the general population. Compared to the general public, young people are more distinguished by the assessment of their civic impact (youth civic influence perception index is 11.1 points higher than the overall population), also they are slightly more inclined to act when various problems arise in a society (especially in a case of political problem - 11% less young people would stay behind, compared to the society as a whole, 8% more young people would agree to contribute to the solution of the problem, 6% more – would initiate actions for solving the problem themselves), young people are also more active in participating in civil and political activities than the society as a whole.



FEATURES OF YOUTH CIVIC EMPOWERMENT

As already mentioned, 2016 Civic Empowerment Index study focuses on young people, their civic activity and attitudes. An increased youth sample size allows us to look at the differences in civic power between different categories of youth. Altogether, the greatest civic power is observed amongst 15-29 yr. old respondents. The analysis has shown that such distinction is not only related to age, but also with a relatively high level of education and a better social status – in the context of the whole society this age group had the most people with higher education and working as specialists or public servants. Looking exclusively into the influence of age, the 15-19 yr. age group stands out: while controlling other factors, such as gender, nationality, education, income, place of residence, it can be observed that school age statistically significantly increases the assessment of your own influence and reduces the feeling of risks that could be encountered by politically active citizens.

The study also revealed that civic power of young people strongly correlates with their scholastic results in middle school: the higher average mark of one increases the civic power by 2.5 points and civil activity index by 6.5 points. As in the general population, the civic power of young people is greatly enhanced by participation in public organizations: the more different types of organizations young people participate in, the greater their civic power is, especially – participation in various civic activities.

For example, young people who participate in or have participated in the activities of various youth organizations have a higher degree of civic power. 36% of the nation's youth have experience in various youth organizations, although it is important to note that it is unevenly distributed among different social and demographic youth groups (more frequent among slightly older generations of young people, more educated, living in bigger cities, more affluent households). The indicator of young people, who currently participate in youth civic organizations, civic empowerment index (58.1) is 20 points higher than those young Lithuanians who have never had such a participation experience (38.0). In addition, research reveals that even if young people are no longer involved in the activities of youth organizations, but previously have been, their civic power (46.9) is on average 10 points higher than those who have not participated in such organizations at all.

There is also a positive link between civic empowerment of young people and participation in after school and informal education activities both at school and outside of school. 78% of the country's 15-29 yr. old population were involved in these kind of activities, out of which even 39% participated in after school, informal education activities both at school and outside of it. Participation experience depends on the household young people live in, their well-being and places of residence. The indicator of civic empowerment of young people who did not participate in such activities is only 36.1, those who have participated in at least one type of extra-curricular activities (arts, sports, engineering-technological, nature and exact sciences, debate and civil initiative clubs, tourism, ethnography, ethno-cultural activities) – 38.4, in two – 44.3, in three – 48.0 and in four or more – 49.7.



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Involvement and participation in volunteering also have a significant impact on civic power of young people. Over the last year 16% of the nations 15-29 yr. olds have volunteered, their civic power index is 51.8. Another 18% young people have volunteered in previous years. Their values of civic power are 49.1 respectively. The civic power index values of young people who have participated in volunteering are more than 10 points higher than the index values of young people who do not have volunteering experience.

The questionnaire also asked respondents how they value the current effectiveness of civic education in school. On average, civic education at the school was evaluated with a mark of 6 on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means "completely ineffective" and 10 is "very effective". It is worth to note that even though students themselves rated civilian education relatively better (almost 7 points on average) than older respondents, pupils who are more active or get better grades rated the effectiveness of civic education more critically than those who receive worse grades or have less civic power. Altogether, this data points out that civic education during lessons is not enough and that informal civic education and participation in the activities of public organizations is important for the development of youth activism and civic empowerment.

Lithuanian Civic Power Index based on methodology developed by scientists Prof. dr. Ainė Ramonaitė, dr. Rūta Žiliukaitė and dr. Mindaugas Degutis has been measured by the Civil Society Institute since 2007.

Civic Empowerment Index research is based on representative surveys of Lithuanian society. In December of 2016 "Spinter Research", a market and public opinion research company, conducted the survey.

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