



CIVIC EMPOWERMENT INDEX 2019

THE MAIN INDICATORS OF THE CIVIC EMPOWERMENT INDEX OF LITHUANIAN SOCIETY 2019

The Civic Empowerment Index research was carried out for the tenth time in 2019. The mean score of the Index has grown to 39.7 points out of 100 and this is the highest value to date since the first survey was conducted in 2007.

The growth is mainly accounted for by an increase in the public perception of civic impact. In society at large there was a growing belief that community and civic organisations, as well as individual citizens have a greater impact on significant public decisions. The index value on this dimension has increased from 55.2 points in 2016 to 61.2 in 2019. There was a slight improvement in the dimension of civic engagement risk assessment: the social setting was seen as more favourable towards civic engagement. The mean value in this dimension has increased from 23.9 points in 2016 to 27.1 in 2019. There was also a slight increase in potential civic engagement, although it stays below the level observed 10 years ago. The mean value of the readiness to solve societal problems has increased from 34.3 points in 2016 to 36.8 in 2019. From a long-term perspective, all three changes described above show an improvement since 2015 and 2016. At the same time, levels of self-reported civic engagement and interest in public issues remains virtually unchanged.

In 2019, the key civic engagement activities included charitable donations (39% of the respondents involved), voluntary environmental cleanup (32%), and engagement in local communities' actions (26%). However, participation in these activities has been steadily declining for the last decade. In comparison to 2012, the number of persons donating to charities declined by 9%, participation in voluntary environmental cleanup declined by 22%, and local community engagement declined by 11%. 2019 saw a growth in only one type of civic activities: signing petitions online (23%) and offline (13%). Engagement in all other activities showed either a slight decline or fluctuated within the margin of statistical error. Participation in civic organisations and movements remained notably stable (8%).

As in previous years, the potential for civic engagement was greatest for solving local problems. 28% of survey respondents said they would initiate solving a local problem, and a further 40% stated they would show support, to a total of 68%. Meanwhile, problems in the economy would mobilise 58% of survey respondents, followed by security with 54% and politics with 38%. Compared to 2016, in 2019 there was a slight increase of individuals who said they would personally contribute to solving the first three problems in the list.

The riskiness of civic engagement were assessed in a more positive light in 2019. However, at least half of the survey respondents viewed each of the five types of risk as more or less plausible. 57% said that it is likely that others may attribute civic engagement to egoistic incentives. 52% thought civic



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engagement was likely to attract public harassment or bullying, and 50% that it was likely to be threatened for being active. 48% agreed it is possible to lose employment because of civic engagement, and 47% responded that civically active individuals may be considered eccentric by others.

Within the dimension of civic impact assessment, which changed the most, 2019 first of all was marked by an increase in the perceived impact of civic organisations and communities. It has increased by an average of 0.49 points, reaching a total of 6.0 points out of 10. A lesser but also significant increase was also observed in the perceived impact on public decision-making made by citizens in general (increasing by 0.35 points to a total of 3.7) and the respondent personally (increasing by 0.25 points to a total of 3.6). Thus the increase in civic impact already observed in 2016 has grown further, albeit to a lesser extent. Two reasons may explain the change. First, the greatest increase in civic impact perception occurred in socially vulnerable groups which, on average, have previously scored lower in the index. They include senior respondents, retired persons, the unemployed, blue-collar workers, lower income groups, and those residing outside large cities. Therefore, it may be that recent social and tax policies increased the self-confidence of more vulnerable individuals. They may now more strongly agree that their needs are taken into account in public decision-making. Although their perception of civic impact is still behind the rest of society, the gap has significantly decreased. Second, the study also supports the presumption that civic impact scores may have increased due to professional union activities in 2018-2019, including strikes, demonstrations, and other actions.

The mean Civic Empowerment Index scores have a direct relationship to the respondents' position in the labour market, individual income, level of education, and age. The highest Civic Empowerment scores were observed in the following groups: high and mid-level managers and small business owners (mean score of 47.2 points), those with the highest income (46.3 points), those with higher education degrees (45.0 points), respondents aged 15–29 (42.4 points) and 30–39 years (42.7).

TEACHERS' CIVIC EMPOWERMENT INDEX 2019

A separate representative survey of Lithuania's teachers was carried out to calculate the Teachers' Civic Empowerment Index for 2019. Teachers achieved a mean value of 53.7 points out of 100, which is the greatest score observed to date in Civic Empowerment Index studies.

Compared to previous years, civic empowerment among teachers increased from an average value of 48.1 points in 2014, 47.8 points in 2009, and 48.6 points in 2008. The Index's dimensions of civic impact perception and civic engagement risk assessment changed the most. Taking longer time perspective into account, their values have been consistently increasing already since 2008. The average scores for these dimensions were, correspondingly, 53.2 and 14.6 points in 2008, and 73.7 and 31.1 points in 2019. Hence, teachers are increasingly positive about civic impact on public decision-making, and are less inclined to consider civic engagement risky.



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Teachers' Civic Empowerment Index score of 53.7 in 2019 is significantly higher when compared to society at large (39.7 points). The greatest difference between teachers and society at large was observed in personal civic engagement. Teachers are twice as likely to participate in civic activities, and scored 67.4 points on this dimension in 2019 compared to 33.8 points scored by the general public. In particular, 71% of teachers have donated to charities, 66% took part in environmental cleanup, 62% have been active in local communities, 46% have signed an online petition and 27% have signed an offline petition, 28% have been involved in civic organisations and movements. 25% of the surveyed teachers have used social networking service, e.g. Facebook, e-mail or other online channels to share information about civic or political issues, or discuss them online. Furthermore, 20% have contacted state institutions about legal violations, took part in demonstrations, or volunteered in social or civic campaigns.

However, teachers' active civic engagement is in significant decline when 2019 is compared to 2014, 2009 or 2008. Teachers' contribution to the most popular activities, i.e. charitable donations, voluntary environmental cleanup, and local community action has fallen by 11% to 14%. Most other activities saw similar declines. Compared to 2014, engagement grew just in two areas, directly related to 2018–2019 teacher protests: the number of teachers joining strikes or participating in demonstrations has increased each by 7%. Hence paradoxically, although teachers have been more actively fighting for their rights in strikes and demonstrations throughout 2018 and 2019, their engagement in other civic activities has declined. Although teachers still dominate as leaders of civic engagement in society, diminished activity may be a sign of possible exhaustion or burnout.

Compared to society at large, teachers are also more interested in public issues. They are more positive about civic impact on public decision-making. They are also slightly more inclined to actively solve problems in politics, local communities, security, or the economy. However there is virtually no difference in how teachers perceive the risks of civic engagement. The latter is a positive development, as in previous years teachers associated civic engagement with a greater number of risks than society at large.

Evaluations of teachers' protests of 2018 and 2019

In 2019, the Civic Empowerment Index study also focused on one of the most prominent public actions, the teachers' professional union protests of 2018 and 2019. 79% of the society's survey respondents indicated they have heard about them.

Data from the teachers' survey shows that teachers see many work-related issues as important. 9 out of 10 teachers agreed that student's behaviour, low wages and burnout were important problems for them. One in three teachers was inclined to personally initiate solutions to problems at school, and a further 50% would contribute to the solutions. Thus, a total 79% of teachers stated they would contribute to solving issues. When asked directly about the 2018-2019 teachers' protests, 31% of the teachers responded they had contributed to them. 21% participated in strikes, 20% signed petitions or letters to state institutions, and 17% took part in demonstrations. Teachers were most accepting of



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moderate and less personally involving means for achieving demands: on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 as “fully unacceptable” and 10 as “fully acceptable”, teachers rated negotiations with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports with 9.5 average points, and signing letters or petitions with 8.9 average points.

Teachers also rated their opinion about the teachers' protest actions of 2018-2019 on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 as “very negative”, and 10 as “very positive”. Generally, the opinion was very supportive. 37% of the teachers rated their approval at 9 to 10 points, and only 8% chose a score less than 5. Society at large had an even higher approval of the protests. Compared to the total mean approval of 8.5 points among teachers, the general public approval averaged 9.1. For teachers, a significant result of protest was publicising the problem: 84% agreed that this goal has been achieved, with 44% stating it was the most important result. 68% agreed that they showed an example to other groups, and 62% saw increased solidarity among teachers. Meanwhile, 34% thought that the demands of the protesters have been met. Thus, from the teachers' perspective the protests were first and foremost a visible public statement.

78% of teachers stated that their family members supported the protests, 78% felt the support of other teachers, and 70% felt supported by friends. To a lesser extent, 64% felt supported by students, and 60% by school administrators. On the lower end, 54% of the teachers attributed support to the students' parents, and 46% to society at large. Thus teachers viewed the general public as least supportive, although the survey data showed that approval of the protests was higher in society at large than among the teachers themselves. Similarly, there was a difference in the rating of the teaching profession. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 as “very low” and 5 as “very high”, teachers rated the prestige of being a teacher on average 0.65 points lower than the general public. These differences in the rating of public support and professional prestige imply that teachers tend to depreciate themselves as a group.

Since 2007, Civic Empowerment Index has been annually calculated by the Civil Society Institute, based on the methodology prepared by scientists Prof. Ainė Ramonaitė, Dr. Rūta Žiliukaitė and Dr. Mindaugas Degutis.

The research of the Civic Empowerment Index is based on representative public surveys. In February and March 2020, such society's and teachers' surveys were carried out by the Market and public opinion research company "Spinter research".

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