



PILIE TINĖS
VISUOMENĖS
INSTITUTAS



Lietuvos Respublikos
socialinės apsaugos
ir darbo ministerija

Pilietinės visuomenės institutas / Civil Society Institute, Didžioji g. 5, LT-01128 Vilnius, Lietuva
Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania

CIVIC EMPOWERMENT INDEX 2020

The Civic Empowerment Index 2020 study was carried out for the eleventh time in the beginning of 2021. The mean score for 2020 has grown to 41.3 points out of 100. This is the highest value to date since the first survey was conducted in 2007.

The change was most strongly influenced by one of the four dimensions of the index, civic activity. The mean score for the civic activity index was 44.0 points out of 100, its highest value since 2007. In comparison, the score was 33.8 points in 2019. The first year of the coronavirus pandemic saw increased participation of Lithuanians in almost all of the 19 civic activities included in the survey. The largest increase was seen in the top three activities: charitable donations (61% of the survey participants indicated they were engaged in this activity in 2020, up by 22%), engagement in local communities (39%, up by 13%), and voluntary environmental clean-up (40%, up by 8%). In 2020 there was also some increase in the following activities: engagement with journalists and other opinion-makers or public communication (11%), informing the police, tax inspectorate, child rights protection service and other state institutions about violations of law (17%). During the first pandemic year, there were significantly less people who did not participate in any of the 19 activities. In 2020 they amounted to 22%, down from 36% in 2019 and 2016.

During 2020, changes have also occurred in the civic impact dimension. The public perception of civic impact which has grown significantly in 2016 and even more in 2019, waned during the past year. The mean value in this dimension has decreased from 61.2 points out of 100 to 55.7 points. The change signifies a return to the value seen in 2016, albeit still high when compared to 2007. During the pandemic, survey participants felt that all entities listed in the survey had less civic impact. These included specific national and municipal government institutions, the mass media, businesses and others. However, the perception of civic impact of non-governmental and civic organizations and local communities decreased the most. Perhaps this may be accounted for by the diminished possibilities to function independently among many civic actors during the pandemic. Another reason may be that the previously observed growth of civic impact or its causes was not very sustainable. The change should also be assessed with some reservation because of methodological changes in the survey: due to the pandemic and ensuing quarantine, the Civic Empowerment Index survey had to be carried out by telephone rather than face-to-face, and the sampling strategy and questionnaire were correspondingly adapted.

The remaining two dimensions of the Civic Empowerment Index did not change much during 2020, although some fluctuations are also worth mentioning. One of them occurred in the potential civic engagement dimension, which measures the possibility that survey participants would engage in civic activity when facing a specific problem. There was an increase of the general determination to take action and seek solutions to political, economic, local, and security problems. In the case of a local problem, 78% of the survey participants indicated they were willing to take action (initiate or



PILIE TINĖS
VISUOMENĖS
INSTITUTAS



Lietuvos Respublikos
socialinės apsaugos
ir darbo ministerija

Pilielinės visuomenės institutas / Civil Society Institute, Didžioji g. 5, LT-01128 Vilnius, Lietuva
Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania

contribute to solutions), followed by 65% in the case of a security problem, 61% in the case of an economic problem, and 46% if the problem was of a political nature. However, across all types of problems there was a decrease of those who were willing to initiate solutions rather than just contribute. There was also a decrease of respondents who did not know what they would do in such situations.

Similar trends were observed in the assessment of risks posed by civic engagement. On one hand, there was a persistent decrease of survey participants who were very suspicious about the social consequences of civic engagement and did not deny any of the potential risks. This accounted for 24% of the participants. Though the number is similar to 26% observed in 2019, it stands in stark contrast to 32% in 2016 and 2015, and 40% in 2014. There was a decrease in the number of respondents who thought civic engagement may be seen by others as eccentric (37%) or attributed to egoistic incentives (54%). 53% thought that it was likely to encounter threats for being active, 51% thought civic engagement could attract public harassment or bullying, and 50% believed it is possible to lose employment because of civic engagement. Compared to the previous year, for almost all risks there were fewer people who denied the risks altogether (agreeing with the statement that "the problem is implausible").

The Civic Empowerment Index survey also measures interest in public issues. However, this dimension did not change significantly during 2020. There was a marked growth of interest in news about culture, business and the economy, complemented by diminished interest in sports and crime news. There was an overall decrease of those who were very interested in public issues and indicated that it was "very important" to receive daily news across all news categories. However, this might be another potential artefact of the methodological changes mentioned previously.

In addition to the usual dimensions, the 2020 Civic Empowerment Index survey also measured the extent of membership in organisations and volunteering during the first year of the pandemic. 53% of the survey participants indicated they were members of various organisations, societies, and associations. Of those, 21% indicated membership in one type of organisation, 14% in two types, and 17% in three and more. Compared to corresponding data from 2016, the share of those who were not members of any organisation has significantly decreased by 20% (totalling 67% in 2016 and 47% in 2020). The share of strongly networked respondents, belonging to three or more organisations, has also increased by 12% (initially at 6% in 2016). These numbers signify positive societal change and signal a more conducive environment for civic activity. Networks of common action are growing stronger and solidarity norms increase with voluntary participation in civic organisations.

Community organisations currently attract the largest share of members. 23% of the survey participants indicated they were members in such organisations, an increase of 17% compared to 2016 (6%). A relatively large share, 18% of the Lithuanian population, also partakes in organisations based on place of residence, real estate ownership, or educational institutions, including membership in residential communities or parent committees. 17% declared membership in leisure, hobby, sports and tourism societies.



PILIE TINĖS
VISUOMENĖS
INSTITUTAS



Lietuvos Respublikos
socialinės apsaugos
ir darbo ministerija

Pilietinės visuomenės institutas / Civil Society Institute, Didžioji g. 5, LT-01128 Vilnius, Lietuva
Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania

According to the survey, 9% of the Lithuanian population have volunteered during the first pandemic year and two quarantines. Of these, only one-third volunteered regularly (at least once a week or once a month). Most survey participants volunteered from time to time by joining organised activities during various events. In 2020, very few volunteers were new to volunteering and had no volunteering experience prior to the pandemic. Most volunteers had experience from before the pandemic: more than half indicated that they volunteered for the same amount of time as before the pandemic, and less than one-fifth volunteered less than before. 36% of respondents with prior volunteering experience who did not volunteer in 2020 (they comprised 18% of the total population) declared they stopped during the pandemic. The share of respondents who did not volunteer and had no plans to do so amounted to 54% of the population and did not change significantly compared to earlier data.

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 March and April 2021, such society's survey was carried out by the UAB "Eurointegracijos projektai".

Lithuanian Civic Empowerment Index 2020 research was financed by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania.

More information: Dr. Ieva Petronytė-Urbonavičienė, ieva@civitas.lt, tel. +370 672 21668.