

# ACTA POLITOLOGICA

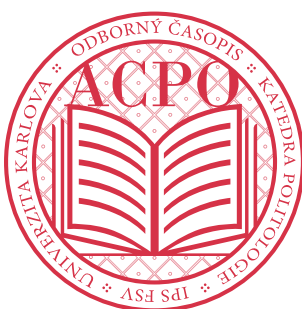
[www.acpo.cz](http://www.acpo.cz)

RECENZOVANÝ ČASOPIS | PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL

2023 | Vol. 15 | No. 3 | ISSN 1803-8220

---

---



POSPÍŠILOVÁ, Jaroslava (2023). Who is mobilized by the presidential election? *Acta Politologica*. Vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 31–46.  
[https://doi.org/10.14712/1803-8220/17\\_2023](https://doi.org/10.14712/1803-8220/17_2023)

Published: 31/10/2023

*Tento článek podléhá autorským právům, kopírování a využívání jeho obsahu bez řádného odkazování na něj je považováno za plagiátorství a podléhá sankcím dle platné legislativy.*

*This article is protected by copyright. Copying and use of its content and presenting it as original research without proper citation is plagiarism, which is subject to legal sanctions.*

---

---

**Katedra politologie Institutu politologických studií**  
Fakulta sociálních věd Univerzity Karlovy

**Department of Political Science, Institute of Political Studies**  
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

## Who is mobilized by the presidential election?

Jaroslava Pospíšilová<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract:

*The concept of representative democracy presupposes the participation of active citizens. A significant drop in the interest and trust of citizens was observed with the onset of the new millennium, not only in voter turnout. However, the Czech president traditionally enjoys quite high support from citizens and leads (except for a few fluctuations) in surveys ranking their trust in politicians. This corresponds to the high interest of voters in participating in the presidential elections, which has gradually increased and, in the last presidential election (2023) in the second round, reached the third-highest level in the history of the independent Czech Republic. The regression analysis results confirm that participation in elections is mainly determined by previous participation; however, a highly personalized election with significant media coverage can also mobilize different types of voters than the general election. Factors of social exclusion such as the rate of restraints and the rate of unemployment retain their negative influence on voter turnout even in the presidential election.*

**Key words:** *presidential elections; general elections; voter turnout; electoral geography*

### Introduction

The Czech Republic is far from the only parliamentary democracy with a directly elected president. Confusion about which elections are more important, from the voters' point of view, can lead to a decrease in voter turnout in parliamentary elections (Tavits 2009). On the other hand, the surveyed countries with a directly elected president showed an average lower voter turnout in the presidential elections (Tavits 2009:220). In the Czech Republic, however, the direct election of the president enjoys unusually high voter interest. While voter turnout in the elections to the Chamber of Deputies in the Czech Republic (lower house of Parliament) has not exceeded 65 per cent in the past 20 years, in the second (run-off) round of the last presidential election (January 2023), it exceeded 70 per cent. The position of the Czech president is particular in many ways for several reasons. Brunclík and Kubát (2017:67) define six circles of circumstances that influence the specificity of the Czech presidency (elitism, lack of liberalism, ceremonialism, mismatch between the constitution and practice, role of the president in times of crisis, constitutional-political traditions); especially its elitism and ceremonialism, given by historical and cultural circumstances, define the unique position of the Czech president. This is reflected not only in how the public perceives the presidency, but also in how the presidents perceive the office.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jaroslava Pospíšilová is a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute of Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague (U Kříže 8, 158 00 Praha 5). Contact: jaroslava.pospisilova@fsv.cuni.cz. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9226-2547>; ResearcherID: HTS-3203-2023.

Since the first direct election of the president was held, in January 2013, voter turnout in the parliamentary elections has oscillated at around 60 per cent; that year, it reached its second all-time low of 59 per cent. The first presidential election did not deviate significantly from this trend, as roughly 40 per cent of eligible voters did not participate. The decline in voter turnout was accompanied by changes in the field of party competition (Haughton and Deegan-Krause 2015) and the growing disinterest of citizens and feeling of disaffection (Linek 2010, 2016), while the interpretation of the decrease in voter turnout by examining the influence of generational change even brought the assumption of a further decrease in voters in elections (Linek 2013b). However, the last two parliamentary elections (2017, 2021) saw increased voter turnout and significant mobilization of the electorate. The following article will attempt to explain what mobilized voters and why the assumption of a further decline in voter turnout was wrong.

This paper aims to answer several questions: (1) What are the main differences in voter turnout in presidential elections and elections to the Chamber of Deputies? (2) Can we estimate from turnout data who are the voters that the presidential election mobilizes? (3) Is this purely a phenomenon of the presidential election, or is the mobilization potential linked more to the persons of the individual candidates? A detailed analysis of territorial reports on voter turnout shows which areas voters were most active in and how individual elections differed. A comparison of the specifics of voter participation in the parliamentary and presidential elections explains where the “silent citizens” are and what factors influence their possible participation.

The article is structured as follows. First, basic theoretical concepts clarifying the level of voter turnout are presented, or non-participation. Furthermore, the specifics of electoral systems regarding the impact on voter mobilization are elaborated. The following summarises the essential findings of the previous electoral geography studies on voter turnout, a description of the dataset and an analytic research strategy. The analysis of the main results is concluded by reflecting on the ability to answer the main research questions and suggestions for further investigation.

## Theoretical Assumptions and Research

A large part of scholars considers political participation to be a necessary prerequisite for a functioning democracy. Developments in traditional and new democracies in recent years, however, indicate that the percentage of citizens participating in conventional political activities is decreasing, and we are witnessing a radical change in citizen participation itself. Some scientists talk about the rise of critical citizens (Norris 1999), who change their habits in political participation from participation in elections to other unconventional forms (Portos, Bosi, and Zamponi 2020; Vráblíková 2017); some name this as a phenomenon of “silent citizens” (Gray 2015), where a lack of political interest is seen as a kind of abdication (Lupia and McCubbins 1998). On the other hand, there are also theories in which non-participation can be a kind of rational choice (Hansen, Palfrey, and Rosenthal 1987).

As noted by Lebeda and Lebedová (Šaradín et al. 2021), the interpretation of the impact of the observed phenomenon on the functioning of democracy is mainly influenced by the authors’ normative anchoring, if they understand democracy in the sense of Schumpeter’s elitist theory, for example, the decline of citizens’ interest will not necessarily be perceived as a risk for the functioning of the regime (Vráblíková 2017). On the other hand,

authors who emphasize equality in a democracy are worried about the effects of low voter turnout rates on the principle of equality of representation (Lijphart 1997). Theorists of democracy (Diamond 2015; Morlino 2012) draw attention to the need to consider the context of new democracies, whose “underground” in the form of citizens’ democratic values can be fragile. It is necessary to examine inactive citizens’ motivations and attitudes towards democracy, as they may ultimately represent a risk to democracy. After all, the level of satisfaction with democracy itself can have its correlate with voter turnout. In post-communist countries, the degree of democratic scepticism substantially influences the willingness to participate in elections more than in Western European countries. A little lesser effect was also manifested in the case of dissatisfaction with the performance of democracy (Karp and Milazzo 2015). While the study investigating cross-national variations of voter turnout evaluates the effect of higher satisfaction with democracy as positive for the expected rate of voter turnout, looking at the development of satisfaction with democracy and the rate of voter turnout in individual countries over time, we get a completely different picture. Dissatisfaction with democracy at the national level, on the other hand, increases social demand for change and, consequently, voter turnout (Ezrow and Xezonakis 2016).

Countless studies deal with electoral participation and its determinants (Cancela and Geys 2016). The most general division is examining the factors of electoral participation or non-participation at the aggregate level (most often of individual states) and, on the other hand, researchers examining individual factors (especially the socio-economic characteristics of the individual). Explanatory models then work with three types of factors – socio-economic factors either at the macro level (e.g. GDP, unemployment rate, urbanization rate, income disproportionality, homogeneity of society/share of ethnic minorities) or micro level (education, age, previous participation, etc.); then with institutional factors (e.g. type of electoral system, degree of disproportionality, voting age, simultaneous elections, compulsory vote, etc.); and thirdly with political factors (closeness of elections, campaign expenses, degree of fragmentation, effective number of parties). The influence of institutional covariates on differences in voter turnout is not applicable at the sub-national level, except for the electoral system, which may differ between individual elections.

Post-communist countries faced a gradual decline in voter turnout (Kostadinova and Power 2007; Kostelka 2017; Páček, Pop-Eleches, and Tucker 2009). In line with studies focused on voter turnout in traditional democracies, this process is not exclusively a matter of ongoing democratization but rather a confluence of influences observed in traditional democracies and specific social changes related to the consolidation of democracy. Non-participation in elections can have two sources, the impact of which has critical normative consequences for the further functioning of democracy (Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006). While non-participation due to indifference may be a rational decision from the voters’ point of view, as their interests will still be represented (Lefkofridi, Giger, and Gallego 2014), non-participation due to alienation, on the other hand, means the voters’ inability to find someone who is closest to their views in the offered spectrum of political representatives. In this case, the great distance between the voters and the elites leads to the decision not to vote at all. However, such non-participation represents a severe violation of the meaning of representation, and elections for these citizens cease to play an essential role as an intermediary in representing their interests (Lefkofridi et al. 2014). These non-voters are characterized as “peripheral to political life” (Bourdin and Tai I 2022:264); they represent the periphery not only in terms of social cleavages but also geographically (Bernard and Šimon 2017).

The habituation theory of voting works with the premise that voting is a habit (Cravens 2020); therefore, great emphasis is placed on political socialization. If a person gets used to participating in elections during the socialization process, there is a high probability that he/she will continue to participate. Conversely, citizens who do not exercise their right to vote in the first years of adulthood will likely remain abstainers in the future (Franklin 2004). Nevertheless, some voters participate in elections only occasionally. Their decision whether to participate in the elections is motivated mainly by the intensity of the election campaign (Goldberg, Lanz, and Sciarini 2019).<sup>2</sup> The campaign's intensity is linked to the degree of media coverage and undoubtedly affects voter turnout (Trumm, Sudulich, and Townsley 2017). The more intense the campaign, the more the voters' feeling grows that there is more at stake, and their willingness to participate in the elections grows. We can observe a more significant mobilization effect on non-voters in campaigns with a populist appeal. With their rhetoric and ability to raise campaign topics, populists have the most extraordinary power to reach habitual non-voters and motivate them to turn out. On the other hand, if their appeal should be too strong, their campaign should have the opposite effect in motivating the anti-populist voters to turn out (Leininger and Meijers 2021).

### ***Specifics of electoral systems and presidential elections as such and their consequences for voter turnout***

The impact of electoral systems on voter turnout is a widely studied topic. However, the research results on the influence of majoritarian and PR systems on voters' willingness to participate in elections are unclear (Cancela and Geys 2016); moreover, aggregate-level studies mainly focus on national legislative elections. The dominant characteristic influencing the level of voter turnout is its proportionality. Studies based mainly on traditional democracies have confirmed the connection between higher voter turnout and higher proportionality. In line with rational choice theory,<sup>3</sup> the higher the voter's chance of success (being represented), the higher his/her willingness to participate in elections. Lefkoridi et al. (2014:302) show that the influence on the impact of the congruence of voter attitudes and the offer of political parties is weakened by the disproportionality of the electoral system. If the voter is in the environment of the majority electoral system, lack of congruence does not play as great a role in his/her participation in the election as it does in the proportional representation system.

However, the results of these studies could not be confirmed in another setting. Extending the analysis to the new democracies of Latin America or CEE substantially reduced the importance of proportionality in explaining voter turnout (Blais and Aarts 2006; Blais and Bodet 2006; Kostadinova and Power 2007; Pacek et al. 2009). Time may explain the low effect of proportionality on turnout in new democracies. The learning model of electoral system effects (Gallego, Rico, and Anduiza 2012) confirms the assumption that the longer a democracy lasts and the longer voters are exposed to the disproportionality of the electoral system, the greater the impact on the willingness to participate in elections.

<sup>2</sup> The results of the study are based on research of Swiss voters, i.e. direct democratic votes; this can also be biased by the specific political culture in Switzerland. Nevertheless, we should expect that such kind of motivation can also affect voters in other systems.

<sup>3</sup> As Geys points out (Geys 2006), rational choice theory fails in explaining the act of voting, but is applicable in case of „neck-to-neck“ competitions as the benefits of voting increase to its relatively small cost.

On the other hand, the disproportionality of the electoral system also affects the electoral strategy of political parties (Gallego et al. 2012). Robbins (2010) points out that party-centric systems are more favourable regarding voter turnout. The reason is a different party strategy for gaining votes; when addressing voters on behalf of the party, the effort to reach the broadest possible spectrum dominates compared to the strategies of individual candidates. PR systems support the feeling of the importance of the election; at the same time, the voter's chance that his/her vote will not be lost is higher than in the majority system. If the probability of a successful election is supposed to be one of the main drivers of voter turnout, the second round in the two-round majority system brings the greatest incentive to voters. The two-round majority system also strengthens the personalization of the election.

Despite its actual competencies, Czechs understand the office of the presidency to be very important and perceive the presidential election as the most important of all elections (CVVM 2019). Therefore, an alternative variable salience of elections is offered (Lysek and Kouba 2022:758). In the polls, the President also enjoys a higher level of trust than the Chamber of Deputies in the long term, despite a significant drop at the end of Miloš Zeman's second term in office (CVVM 2023). It is necessary to consider that the same subjects are usually not competing in these elections, and the role of political parties is significantly weakened in the environment of the presidential election. The presidential election occupies a unique position; its difference does not stem purely from the type of electoral system. Comparing the parliamentary regimes with direct presidential elections, we have to say that the direct election of the president in a parliamentary system does not necessarily bring with it a higher degree of confrontation and division of society caused by the conduct of the campaign; this is more determined by the personality of the candidate than by the method of election (Tavits 2009).

### ***Electoral geography***

The issue of electoral participation in the Czech Republic was investigated on an individual level, particularly by Linek (Linek 2013b, 2013a; Linek and Lyons 2007; Linek and Petrůšek 2016; Vlachová 2012). At the aggregate level, the topic of voter turnout is regularly part of the analysis of the results of the elections, but it is one of the least-researched aspects of the elections (Havlík and Lysek 2022; Havlík and Voda 2018; Kostecký et al. 2015; Kouba 2007; Lysek and Macků 2022; Lysek, Pánek, and Lebeda 2021; Maškarinec 2017, 2020; Šaradín et al. 2021; Šedo 2018; Šimon 2015). Devoting the most space to electoral participation in his study is Šimon (2015); he finds a spatial connection between electoral abstention and the delimitation of areas with predominantly German population before WW II (cf. Kouba 2007). In addition to socio-economic factors, it is clear that geographical factors also influence voter turnout. Electoral geography complements socio-economic and institutional factors of electoral behaviour with spatial context (Cho and Rudolph 2008; Fiorino, Pontarollo, and Ricciuti 2021; Mansley and Demšar 2015).



## Data and methods

By focusing on the mobilization effect of the presidential election in comparison with the turnout in the elections to the Chamber of Deputies, I follow up on previous works in spatial analysis of aggregated data. The study is mainly exploratory and descriptive, intending to reflect the surprising increase in voter turnout in the latest presidential elections. The dataset for analysis is created from the election data available from the Czech Statistical Office. The advantage of aggregated data are their complexity; on the other hand, the disadvantage is the impossibility of interpreting the connections found at the aggregated level to the individual level (so-called ecological fallacy). Between the elections of 2013 and 2017, there were significant changes in the structure of municipalities, mainly the creation of new municipalities after the reduction of former military areas; therefore, 6,248 administrative units were included in the analysis in 2013 and a total of 6,254 units in the following years. For spatial analysis, it is advisable to use the lowest possible level of aggregation; due to the availability of socio-demographic data, the level of municipalities is used as the analytical unit. These are a total of three elections to the Chamber of Deputies and three presidential elections (both rounds); the socio-demographic characteristics come from open data (mainly from the 2011 population and housing census (SLDB) for the years 2013 and 2021 and for the presidential elections of 2018 and 2023; in addition, the database of districts published by the Chamber of Executors was supplemented). The results of the nearest elections are compared with each other (in 2013, the presidential election took place first, followed by the general elections in the same year; the 2018 presidential election is compared with the 2017 parliamentary election, and finally, the last presidential election in 2023 is compared with the 2021 parliamentary election). For comparison, participation in the second round of the presidential election is used, where a maximum mobilisation effect is expected due to the nature of the electoral system. The changes in the geographical distribution of voter turnout are calculated by the differences in the standardized values of voter turnout in the presidential elections and the elections to the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>4</sup>

Descriptive data analysis was supplemented with spatial analysis tools, namely Moran's I and hot spots and cold spots analysis using the LISA method in the GeoDa software. These make it possible to reveal regional variations and the degree of spatial autocorrelation in the data. Standardized values of voter turnout are compared, which allows a better evaluation of the variability of the voter turnout relative to the average. Both data are compared within the differential local Moran's I procedure. A regression model was also created for each block of elections to estimate voter turnout. The combination of global OLS results with spatial analysis significantly enriches the interpretation. The projection of the residuals into the spatial analysis shows the model's weak points.

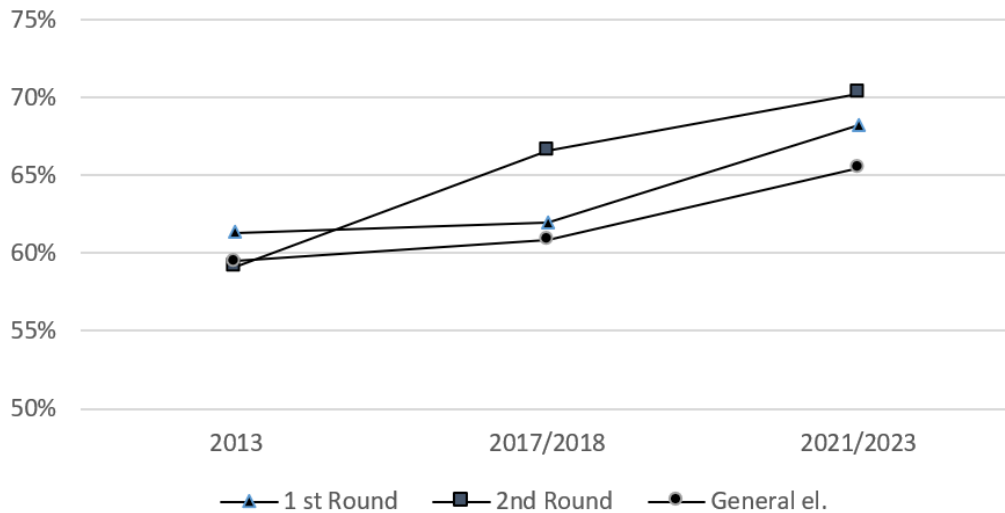
## Development of turnout in the presidential elections 2013-2023

Voter turnout in presidential elections is among the highest in the Czech Republic (Chart 1). As already mentioned above, these often play a crucial role. However, in the past 10 years, we can also observe an increase in voter turnout in elections to the Chamber of Deputies.

<sup>4</sup> In this order, even in the event that the elections to the Chamber of Deputies preceded in time, because the voter turnout in the presidential elections is higher, the resulting difference thus acquires positive values, which is easier to interpret due to our research question.

Chart 1: Voter turnout rates 2013-2023

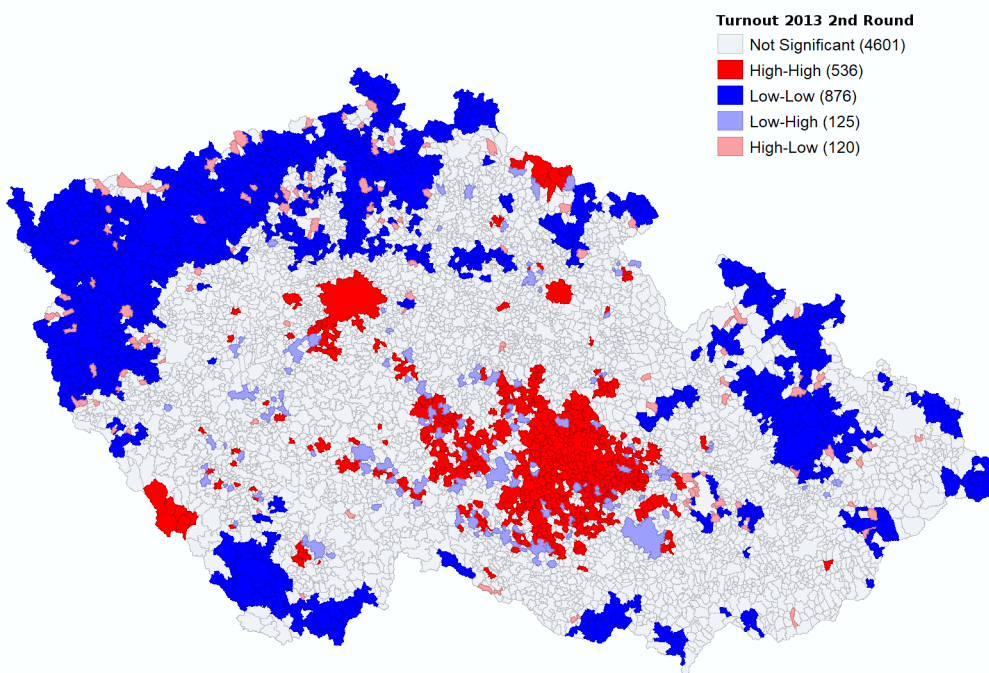
Turnout in presidential and general elections



Source: VOLBY.cz, author.

As shown in Map 1, the spatial scheme of the distribution of voter turnout in the 2013 presidential election copied the previously known rules of low voter turnout in border regions (Kouba 2007; Šimon 2015), especially in the areas of Karlovy Vary, the Ústí Region and Jeseníky, the last presidential election brought a slight weakening of this pattern (Map 2).

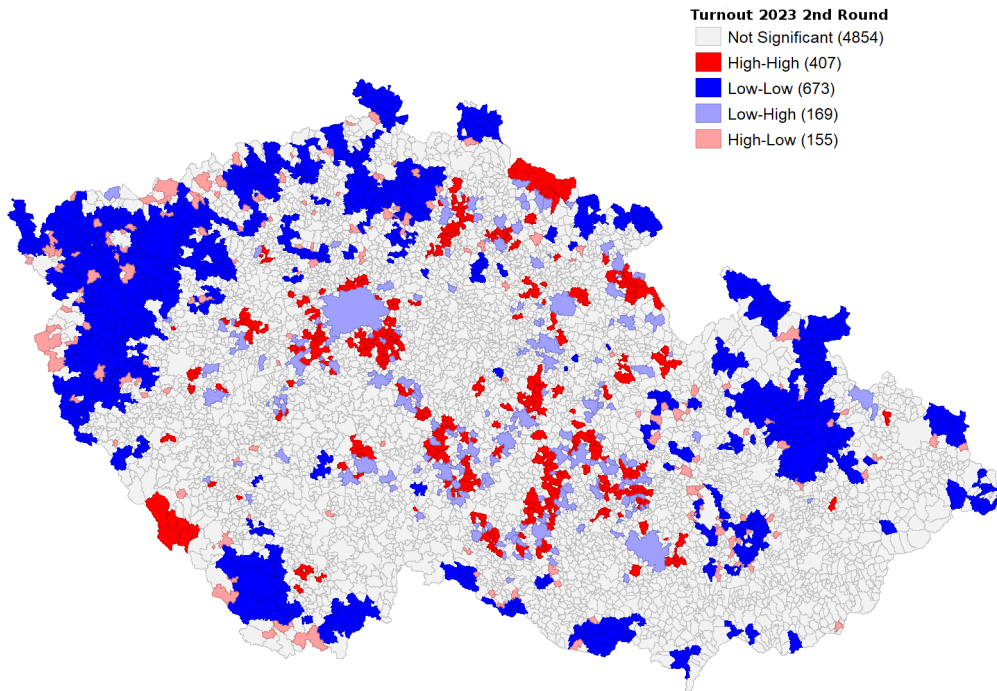
Map 1: Geographical distribution of places with significantly lower and significantly higher voter turnout, 2nd Round 2013



Source: author's calculations in GeoDa.



**Map 2: Geographical distribution of places with significantly lower and significantly higher voter turnout, 2nd Round 2023**

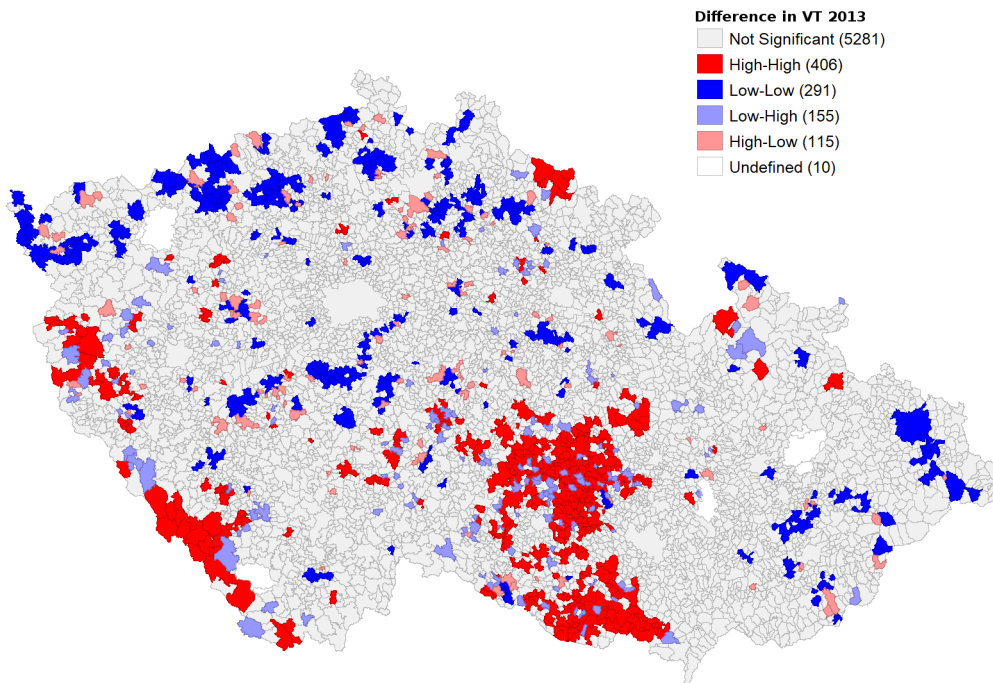


*Source: author's calculations in GeoDa.*

### ***Mobilization effect of the presidential election***

Given the nature of our data, it is better to ask where the mobilization effect of the presidential election is most pronounced. In the first presidential election, we observed that the most significant increase in voter turnout compared to the last parliamentary elections was in the Vysočina region, so it can be concluded that the mobilization effect of the person of Miloš Zeman was particularly evident in the election (see Map 3). These results were subsequently confirmed by regression analysis<sup>5</sup>; the results of Miloš Zeman in the first round are a relatively strong predictor of voter turnout in the second round (the value of the standardized coefficient  $\beta=0,217$ ).

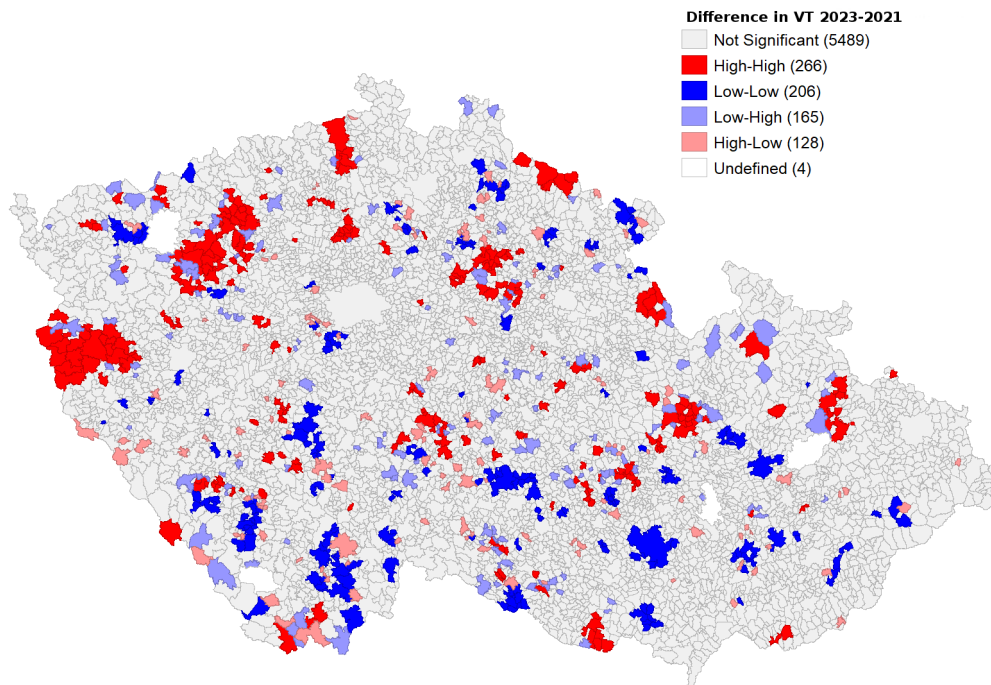
<sup>5</sup> The results of the regression analysis will be discussed in more detail below.

**Map 3: Comparison of voter turnout in the 2013 parliamentary and presidential elections**

*Source: author's calculations in GeoDa.*

In the second presidential election (2018), we can again observe a mobilization effect in the Vysočina region. However, its extent is smaller than in the case of the first presidential election (2013). Nevertheless, in the estimated model, Miloš Zeman's election result (he served two terms) remains a significant predictor of voter turnout in the second round. In the spatial analysis, the „demobilization effect“ was more pronounced in the second presidential election in Prague; on the contrary, voter turnout increased in municipalities in mountainous areas, especially in the Krkonoše, Orlické hory and Šumava regions, and parts of Jeseníky.

The third presidential election (2023) brought a new battle with new candidates; the geographical distribution of the difference in voter turnout in the presidential election compared to the last parliamentary election for the first time lacks a significant area of clusters of higher turnout in the Vysočina region (Map 4). Overall, the spatial difference in the increase or decrease in voter turnout is more fragmented; significant clusters are observed only in the foothills of Krušné hory and on the southwestern border of the Czech Republic. The higher election gains of Andrej Babiš in the first round of the presidential election are, according to our regression model estimates (the value of the standardized coefficient  $\beta=0,138$ ), a stronger predictor of voter turnout in the second round than the gains of Petr Pavel; in addition, this variable was strongly correlated with the ANO result in the 2021 election. In other words, in electoral districts where Andrej Babiš won in the first round, the model predicts a slightly higher increase in voter turnout in the second round compared to districts where Petr Pavel won in the first round.

**Map 4: Comparison of voter turnout in the 2021 parliamentary and 2023 presidential elections**

*Source: author's calculations in GeoDa.*

### **What affects voter turnout?**

Based on previous studies, variables were selected for the regression model of voter turnout. Three models were created, each for a different presidential election (for detailed results, see Table 1). Similar to the case of examining mobilization effects, the dependent variable in the model is participation in the second round of the presidential election. The explanatory power of all three models is high (0.7, respectively, 0.6 share of explained variance). Following the habitual theory, the most significant predictor of voter turnout was the level of voter turnout in previous general elections. The influence of socio-demographic factors varies slightly in individual models. While the level of voter turnout in 2013 is, following previous findings, influenced by the age composition of the municipality (a positive relationship can be found both with the share of children under 15 and especially with the share of seniors), the model of voter turnout in 2023 estimates the relationship to be negative. A higher proportion of people over 65 in a given village is associated with lower voter turnout; whether this is a change in the voting behaviour of the older age group or the effect of the given presidential election, we cannot reliably verify from our analysis.

A similar difference between the individual models can also be found for the predictor of education. In the first presidential election, a higher voter turnout is associated with municipalities with a higher rate of university-educated residents, while primary education, on the other hand, shows a negative relationship following previous literature. However, the model for the second and third presidential elections shows the relationship to be negative; a higher share of the university-educated population meant a lower turnout, while the share of the population with primary education correlated positively with the turnout. In the second presidential election, Miloš Zeman mobilized more voters in areas with higher levels of

primary education and demobilized those with higher shares of university-educated voters. This relationship remained negative even in the presidential election in 2023; a similar pattern was already recorded in the parliamentary elections in 2021 (Lysek and Macků 2022). The share of people facing distraints, the share of unemployed, and the size of the municipality according to the number of inhabitants maintained the same negative effect across all three presidential elections to date. Factors of social exclusion also manifest themselves in electoral non-participation in an otherwise highly mobilizing presidential election.

The final socio-demographic variable tested in the turnout models was the ski area variable. Given that the original models in the geographical display of residuals contain significant clusters in the area of the border mountains, a dichotomous variable indicating the presence of ski resorts in or near the village was created based on data on the location of larger ski resorts. Presidential elections have always been held in January, and the outflow of voters from larger cities due to skiing season is a media-friendly topic <sup>6</sup>; the increased voter turnout in mountain municipalities due to the number of voters with voter cards is unfortunately impossible to document with official statistics. The positive effect of the ski resort variable was manifested in all three models; the increased interest in participating in the presidential election is indeed related to the presence of a ski resort.

As political factors influence voter turnout, the already commented voter turnout in the nearest parliamentary elections was included in the model <sup>7</sup>. As an indicator of the candidate's mobilization effect (in the sense of the ability to appeal to voters even in the second round), the models tested the election results from the first round for both finalists. In the 2013 presidential election, this effect is more potent in Miloš Zeman's case than Karel Schwarzenberg's. The difference between the mobilization effect of Miloš Zeman and Jiří Drahoš in the 2018 presidential election is even more significant. Although, from the perspective of the mobilization effect of individual candidates, the presidential election in 2023 was more balanced, we can say that Andrej Babiš's district victories were a stronger predictor of voter turnout in the second round. Looking at standardized party gains in parliamentary elections, indicating the „strongholds“ of individual parties, and their effect on voter turnout in the second round of the presidential election, a slightly negative effect is evident in areas of higher support for the far-right SPD in the 2018 and 2023 elections, as well as an adverse effect for the centrist ANO in 2018.

On the contrary, areas of higher support for the centre-right SPOLU coalition (political alliance formed for the 2021 legislative election, composed of the Civic Democratic Party, Christian Democrats, and TOP09) had a slight positive effect on voter turnout in 2023. Electoral strongholds of TOP09 in 2013 and ANO in 2021 were not included in the analysis due to collinearity with the electoral gains of Karel Schwarzenberg, respectively Andrej Babiš in the first round of the presidential election. Therefore, these party candidates could mobilize voters in their strongholds.

---

<sup>6</sup> The weather is a surveyed predictor of the level of voter turnout in several studies, the factor of the presence of a ski resort might be a similar sort of category (Becker, Fetzer, and Novy 2017).

<sup>7</sup> General elections in 2013 were held subsequently; nevertheless, it seems more accurate to compare these two elections due to the effect of current social moods and changes on the willingness to participate in elections.



**Table 1: Regression model results explaining voter turnout in the second round of presidential election**

	2013			2018			2023		
	Unstand. coef. B	Std. Error	$\delta$	Unstand. coef. B	Std. Error	$\delta$	Unstand. coef. B	Std. Error	$\delta$
Men [%]	-3,713	2,07	-0,013	-4,208	1,893	-0,015	-3,388	1,84	-0,015
Kids (0-14Y) [%]	7,606	2,133	0,029	-2,086	1,876	-0,009	1,596	1,825	0,008
Elderly (65+) [%]	9,83	1,653	0,052	2,755	1,321	0,018	-5,092	1,275	-0,039
Unemployed [%]	-7,843	1,365	-0,047	-7,001	1,577	-0,035	-4,472	1,55	-0,027
Education (primary) [%]	-1,727	1,447	-0,011	5,742	1,304	0,04	2,303	1,307	0,019
Education (college degree) [%]	6,443	2,071	0,032	-16,562	2,11	-0,058	-9,55	2,069	-0,04
Distraints [%]	-16,695	1,469	-0,092	-19,745	1,281	-0,118	-12,668	1,271	-0,091
Number of inhabitants (10K)	-2,051	0,126	-0,133	-1,427	0,108	-0,1	-1,439	0,104	-0,121
Ski resort	3,703	0,531	0,048	4,813	0,455	0,068	3,942	0,445	0,067
Zscore: KSCM (last elections)	-0,285	0,068	-0,035	-0,442	0,062	-0,06			
Zscore: Zeman 1st Round	1,767	0,066	0,217						
Zscore: Schwarzenberg 1st Round	0,876	0,081	0,109						
Zscore: ANO 2011 (last elections)				-0,578	0,06	-0,077			
Zscore: SPD (last elections)				-0,538	0,055	-0,072	-0,463	0,054	-0,075
Zscore: Zeman 2018 1st Round				1,166	0,092	0,157			
Zscore: Drahoš 1st Round				0,45	0,069	0,06			
Zscore: SPOLU (ODS+TOP09+KDU-ČSL) (last elections)							0,229	0,071	0,037
Zscore: Pavel 1st Round							0,524	0,076	0,085
Zscore: Babiš 1st Round							0,851	0,089	0,138
Zscore: Voter turnout (last general elections)	5,432	0,077	0,66	5,243	0,068	0,694	4,232	0,069	0,675
(Constant)	68,945	1,399		77,784	1,31		81,291	1,277	
R2		0,718			0,755			0,665	
Adj R2		0,718			0,754			0,664	
N cases		6132			6140			6140	

Source: OLS regressions, author's calculations in IBM SPSS Statistics 24.

## Conclusion

Voter turnout in presidential elections is the least researched phenomenon of voter behaviour in the Czech Republic. This study was rather descriptive and tried to fill this gap. Although we have no data available to examine voter motivations at the individual level, we can examine the specifics of voter turnout using aggregated data. A comparison of all the presidential elections held so far (2013, 2018 and 2023) with the nearest parliamentary elections yielded an answer to the question of which factors positively influence higher turnout in the presidential election and in which areas the most significant mobilization of voters took place.

Combining spatial data with standard OLS results showed that the most significant predictor of presidential turnout is the level of voter turnout in previous general elections, consistent with the assumption that the decision to vote is a habit. The interpretation of the partial results is closely linked to the individual candidates in the second round of the presidential election. While in the first presidential election the turnout patterns did not differ much from those of the general elections, in the second and third elections, it was possible to mobilize voters in areas with a higher proportion of people with lower education. A highly personalized presidential election has the potential to appeal to voters who do not usually participate in elections. On the other hand, it confirms the importance of socio-economic factors for the willingness to participate in elections; areas with a higher rate of distraints and unemployment remain the least participating even in the presidential election.

The increase in voter turnout in presidential elections follows the trend observed in parliamentary elections. However, based on the analysis of spatial data on voter turnout, we can conclude that the patterns of voter behaviour are also partly linked to the personalities of individual candidates and their ability to mobilize specific groups of voters.

Similarly, we observe patterns of territorial distribution of support for some candidates that correspond to the patterns of support for some political parties in parliamentary elections. While Miloš Zeman was able to use the mobilization of voters in areas of strong support for ANO in the 2018 elections to his advantage, Petr Pavel (elected president in 2023) found his strongholds in areas of victory for the SPOLU coalition from the 2021 elections.

Undoubtedly, the media attention devoted to the presidential election and the specific relationship of Czechs to the presidential office also plays a significant role. However, we cannot verify this fact from the municipal election results; for further research, it would be appropriate to obtain representative post-election data to examine individual voter motivations for participating in the presidential election.

## REFERENCES:

- ADAMS, James; DOW, Jay; MERRILL, Samuel (2006). The Political Consequences of Alienation-Based and Indifference-Based Voter Abstention: Applications to Presidential Elections. *Political Behavior*. Vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 65–86. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-005-9002-1>.
- BECKER, Sascha O.; FETZER, Thiemo; NOVY, Dennis (2017). Who Voted for Brexit? A Comprehensive District-Level Analysis. *Economic Policy*. Vol. 32, no 92, pp. 601–650. <https://doi.org/10.1093/epolic/eix012t>.
- BERNARD, Josef; ŠIMON, Martin (2017). Vnitřní Periferie v Česku: Multidimenzionalita Sociálního Vyloučení ve Venkovských Oblastech. *Sociologický Časopis*. Vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 3–28. <https://doi.org/10.13060/00380288.2017.53.1.299>.
- BLAIS, André; AARTS, Kees (2006). Electoral Systems and Turnout. *Acta Politica*. Vol. 41, no. (2), pp. 180–196.
- BLAIS, André; BODET, Marc André (2006). Does Proportional Representation Foster Closer Congruence between Citizens and Policy Makers? *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 39, no. 10, pp. 1243–1262. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414005284374>.
- BOURDIN, Sebastien; TAI, Jiwan I. (2022). Abstentionist Voting – Between Disengagement and Protestation in Neglected Areas: A Spatial Analysis of The Paris Metropolis. *International Regional Science Review*. Vol. 45, no. 3, pp. 263–292. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01600176211034131>.
- BRUNCLÍK, Miloš; KUBÁT, Michal (2017). *Kdo Vládne Česku?* Brno: Barrister & Principal.
- CANCELA, João; GEYS, Benny (2016). Explaining Voter Turnout: A Meta-Analysis of National and Subnational Elections. *Electoral Studies*. Vol. 42, pp. 264–275. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2016.03.005>.
- CHO, Wendy K. Ta.; RUDOLPH, Thomas J. (2008). Emanating Political Participation: Untangling the Spatial Structure behind Participation. *British Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 273–289. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123408000148>.
- CRAVENS, Matthew D. (2020). Measuring the Strength of Voter Turnout Habits. *Electoral Studies*. Vol. 64 (January), pp. 102–117. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2020.102117>
- CVVM (2019). *Tisková Zpráva: Důležitost Jednotlivých Typů Voleb Očima Veřejnosti – Duben 2019*. Praha.



- CVVM (2023). *Tisková Zpráva: Důvěra Ústavním Institutům Na Přelomu Let 2022 a 2023*. Praha.
- DIAMOND, Larry (2015). Facing up to the Democratic Recession. *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 141–155.
- EZROW, Lawrence; XEZONAKIS, Georgios (2016). Satisfaction with Democracy and Voter Turnout: A Temporal Perspective. *Party Politics*. Vol 22, no. 1, pp. 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068814549335>.
- FIORINO, Nadia; PONTAROLLO, Nicola; RICCIUTI, Roberto (2021). Spatial Links in the Analysis of Voter Turnout in European Parliamentary Elections. *Letters in Spatial and Resource Sciences*. Vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 65–78. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12076-021-00265-6>.
- FRANKLIN, Mark N. (2004). *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies Since 1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- GALLEGO, Aina; GUILLEM, Rico; ANDUIZA, Eva (2012). Disproportionality and Voter Turnout in New and Old Democracies. *Electoral Studies*. Vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 159–169. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2011.10.004>.
- GEYS, Benny (2006). ‘Rational’ Theories of Voter Turnout: A Review. *Political Studies Review*. Vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 16–35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-9299.2006.00034.x>.
- GOLDBERG, Andreas C.; LANZ, Simon; PASCAL Sciarini (2019). Mobilizing Different Types of Voters: The Influence of Campaign Intensity on Turnout in Direct Democratic Votes. *Electoral Studies*. Vol. 57, March 2018, pp. 196–222. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2018.11.008>.
- GRAY, Sean W. D. (2015). Mapping Silent Citizenship: How Democratic Theory Hears Citizens’ Silence and Why It Matters. *Citizenship Studies*. Vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 474–491. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2015.1074346>.
- HANSEN, Stephen; PALFREY, Thomas R.; ROSENTHAL, Howard (1987). The Downsian Model of Electoral Participation: Formal Theory and Empirical Analysis of the Constituency Size Effect. *Public Choice*. Vol. 52, no. 1, pp. 15–33.
- HAUGHTON, Tim; DEEGAN-KRAUSE, Kevin (2015). Hurricane Season: Systems of Instability in Central and East European Party Politics. *East European Politics and Societies*. Vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 61–80. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325414566072>.
- HAVLÍK, Vlastimil; LYSEK, Jakub (2022). The Czech 2021 General Election and Its Impact on the Party System. *Politologický Casopis*. Vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 225–238. <https://doi.org/10.5817/PC2022-3-225>.
- HAVLÍK, Vlastimil; VODA, Petr (2018). Cleavages, Protest or Voting for Hope? The Rise of Centrist Populist Parties in the Czech Republic. *Swiss Political Science Review*. Vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 161–186. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12299>.
- KARP, Jeffrey A.; MILAZZO, Caitlin (2015). Democratic Scepticism and Political Participation in Europe. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*. Vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 97–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2014.996157>.
- KOSTADINOVA, Tatiana; POWER, Timothy J. (2007). Does Democratization Depress Participation? *Political Research Quarterly*. Vol. 60, no. 3, pp. 363–377. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912907304154>.
- KOSTELECKÝ, Tomáš; MIKEŠOVÁ, Renáta; POLÁKOVÁ, Markéta; ČERMÁK, Daniel; BERNARD, Josef; ŠIMON, Martin (2015). *Geografie Výsledků Parlamentních Voleb: Vzorce Volebního Chování v Česku*. Praha: Sociologický ústav AV ČR, v.v.i.
- KOSTELKA, Filip (2017). Does Democratic Consolidation Lead to a Decline in Voter Turn-

- out? Global Evidence since 1939. *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 111, no. 4, pp. 653–667. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055417000259>.
- KOUBA, Karel (2007). Institucionalizace a Prostorové Režimy. *Czech Sociological Review*. Vol. 43, no. 5, pp. 1017–37. <https://doi.org/10.13060/00380288.2007.43.5.08>.
- LEFKOFRIDI, Zoe; GIGER, Nathalie; GALLEGO, Aina (2014). Electoral Participation in Pursuit of Policy Representation: Ideological Congruence and Voter Turnout. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*. Vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 291–311. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2013.846347>.
- LEININGER, Arndt; MEIJERS, Maurits J. (2021). Do Populist Parties Increase Voter Turnout? Evidence From Over 40 Years of Electoral History in 31 European Democracies. *Political Studies*. Vol. 69, no. 3, pp. 665–685. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321720923257>.
- LIJPHART, Arend (1997). Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma. *The American Political Science Review*. Vol. 91, no. 1, pp. 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952255>.
- LINEK, Lukáš (2010). *Zrazení Snu? Struktura a Dynamika Postojů k Politickému Režimu a Jeho Institucím a Jejich Důsledky*. Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství (SLON).
- LINEK, Lukáš (2013a). *Kam Se Ztratili Voliči?* Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury.
- LINEK, Lukáš (2013b). Vliv Generační Výměny Na Pokles Volební Účasti v ČR Mezi Lety 1990 Až 2010. *Evropská Volební Studia*. Vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.5817/CEP-SR.2013.4.346>
- LINEK, Lukáš (2016). Legitimacy, Political Disaffection and Discontent with (Democratic) Politics in the Czech Republic. *Acta Politologica*. Vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 51–73.
- LINEK, Lukáš; LYONS, Pat (2007). Zdroje a Motivace Volební Účasti. In LEBEDA, Tomáš; LINEK, Lukáš; LYONS, Pat; VLACHOVÁ, Klára (eds.). *Voliči a volby 2006*. Praha: Sociologický ústav AV ČR, v.v.i., pp. 63–86.
- LINEK, Lukáš; PETRÚŠEK, Ivan (2016). What's Past Is Prologue, or Is It? Generational Effects on Voter Turnout in Post-Communist Countries, 1990–2013. *Electoral Studies*. Vol. 42, June 2016, pp. 78–90. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2016.02.002>.
- LUPIA, Arthur; MCCUBBINS, Mathew D. (1998). *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LYSEK, Jakub; KOUBA, Karel (2022). The Unintended Costs and Unfulfilled Promises of Concurrent Elections: A Natural Experiment on Turnout and Invalid Voting. *East European Politics and Societies*. Vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 753–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325421989804>.
- LYSEK, Jakub; MACKŮ, Karel (2022). Continuity in Discontinuity? Spatial Patterns of Electoral Behaviour in the 2021 Czech Parliamentary Elections. *Politologicky Casopis*. Vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 260–280. <https://doi.org/10.5817/PC2022-3-260>.
- LYSEK, Jakub; PÁNEK, Jiří; LEBEDA, Tomáš (2021). Who Are the Voters and Where Are They? Using Spatial Statistics to Analyse Voting Patterns in the Parliamentary Elections of the Czech Republic. *Journal of Maps*. Vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 33–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17445647.2020.1819901>.
- MANSLEY, Ewan; DEMŠAR, Urška (2015). Space Matters: Geographic Variability of Electoral Turnout Determinants in the 2012 London Mayoral Election. *Electoral Studies*. Vol. 40, December 2015, pp. 322–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2015.10.003>.
- MAŠKARINEC, Pavel (2017). A Spatial Analysis of Czech Parliamentary Elections, 2006–2013. *Europe – Asia Studies*. Vol. 69, no. 3, pp. 426–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136>.

2017.1313962

- MAŠKARINEC, Pavel (2020). Crossing the Left-Right Party Divide? Understanding the Electoral Success of the Czech Pirate Party in the 2017 Parliamentary Elections. *Politics*. Vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 510–526. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395720920768>.
- MORLINO, Leonardo (2012). *Changes for Democracy. Actors, Structures, Processes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- NORRIS, Pippa (1999). *Critical Citizens. Global Support for Democratic Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- PACEK, Alexander C.; POP-ELECHES, Grigore; TUCKER, Joshua A. (2009). Disenchanted or Discerning: Voter Turnout in Post-Communist Countries. *Journal of Politics*. Vol. 71, no. 2, pp. 473–491. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381609090409>.
- PORTOS, Martín; BOSI, Lorenzo; ZAMPONI, Lorenzo (2020). Life beyond the Ballot Box: The Political Participation and Non-Participation of Electoral Abstainers. *European Societies*. Vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 231–265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2019.1610785>.
- ROBBINS, Joseph W. (2010). The Personal Vote and Voter Turnout. *Electoral Studies*. Vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 661–672. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2010.07.001>.
- ŠARADÍN, Pavel; LEBEDA, Tomáš; LEBEDOVÁ, Eva; LYSEK, Jakub; MERKLOVÁ, Kateřina; OSTRÁ, Daniela; SOUKOP, Michal; ZAPLETALOVÁ, Markéta; ZYMOVÁ, Kateřina (2021). *Češi a Demokracie v Digitální Době*. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury.
- ŠEDO, Jakub a kol. (2018). *České Prezidentské Volby v Roce 2018*. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury.
- ŠIMON, Martin (2015). Measuring Phantom Borders: The Case of Czech/Czechoslovakian Electoral Geography. *Erdkunde*. Vol. 69, no. 2, pp. 139–150. <https://doi.org/10.3112/erdkunde.2015.02.04>.
- TAVITS, Margit (2009). *Presidents with Prime Ministers. Do Direct Elections Matter?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- TRUMM, Siim; SUDULICH, Laura; TOWNSLEY, Joshua (2017). Information Effect on Voter Turnout: How Campaign Spending Mobilises Voters. *Acta Politica*. Vol. 52, no. 4, pp. 461–478. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41269-016-0027-8>.
- VLACHOVÁ, Klára (2012). Volební Neúčast: Kdo Nešel k Volbám? In LINEK, Lukáš (ed.). *Voliči a volby 2010*. Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství (SLON).
- VRÁBLÍKOVÁ, Kateřina (2017). *What Kind of Democracy? Participation, Inclusiveness and Contestation*. New York and London: Routledge.