

Czech (non)transformation 2022

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Written by STEM and Institut 2050



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Introduction

In the development of this project, **STEM** and **Institut 2050** drew from their experience on how green transformation, the European Green Deal, and fight against climate change are perceived by the Czech public. This has recently been addressed in studies such as *Divided by Freedom: Climate Change or Czech Climate 2021* as well as partial studies focusing on individual elements of transformation within EU policies.

Research to date indicates that a large majority of the Czech public does not doubt that climate change is real, man-made, and is a serious problem. At the same time, they are not sure when and how this problem should be addressed. Climate change is often seen as a fairly abstract global phenomenon. The attitudes of the Czech public to possible solutions are not grounded, well-founded, and based on interest.

Previous research also shows that attitudes to climate change do not divide the society deeply. The discussion is not split among bubbles and isolated groups. Limited differences were found with respect to age, education, and socio-economic status. However, this can considerably change when specific measures and steps to mitigate the impact of climate change are gradually taken.

This project's goal was to identify in detail concerns (barriers, threats) and positive expectations (opportunities, benefits) of the Czech society in relation to the transformation. The project also sought to identify narratives allowing to alleviate concerns and curb insecurity, build up expectations, and test different (policy) instruments based on EU policies, the Green Deal, and FF55.

Methods

Data collection method: a combination of on-line and personal interviewing (CAWI+CAPI).

2086 citizens of the Czech Republic over 18 years of age were interviewed.

The sample is representative of: the adult population of the Czech Republic.

Selection methods: quota selection based on sex, age, education, size of the place of residence, and region.

Date of inquiry: May 6 – 30, 2022

The majority of people support nature conservation and environmental protection

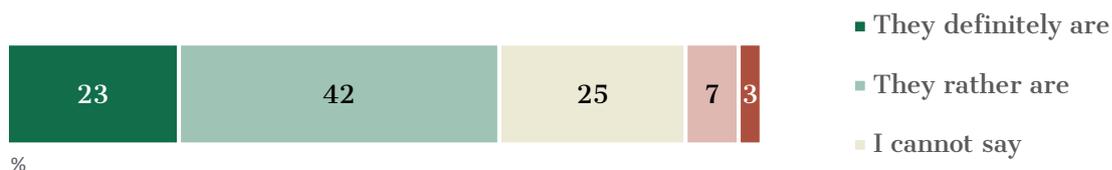
Currently, there is a consensus in Czech society on basic attitudes towards nature and climate change. The ideas of nature conservation and environmental protection are important for the majority of people. People generally acknowledge that climate change is a problem and should (somehow) be addressed immediately.

There is a fairly broad consensus that **climate change exists (61 %)**. Regarding the question of when climate issues need to be addressed, **half of the Czech population**

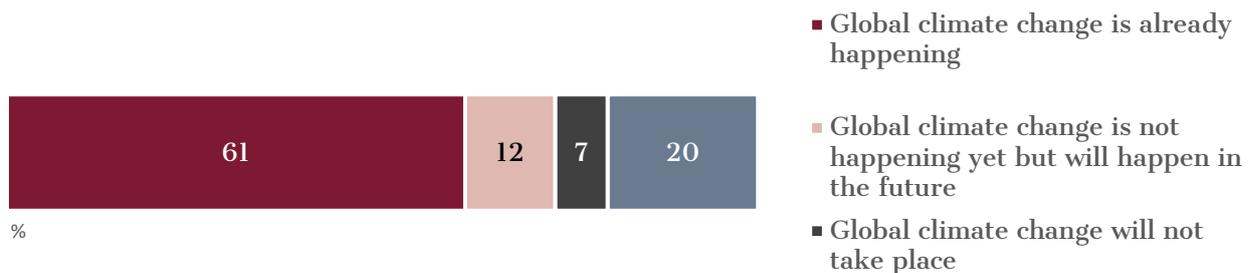
(48 %) would start immediately, and a quarter of the population (24 %) would start in this decade. Two-thirds of the population (67 %) agree that there will have to be a substantial change.

This implies that it is unnecessary to persuade society more actively that there is a problem and that the problem needs to be addressed. Much more energy will have to be invested into the effort to **find a consensus on how to deal with the crisis.**

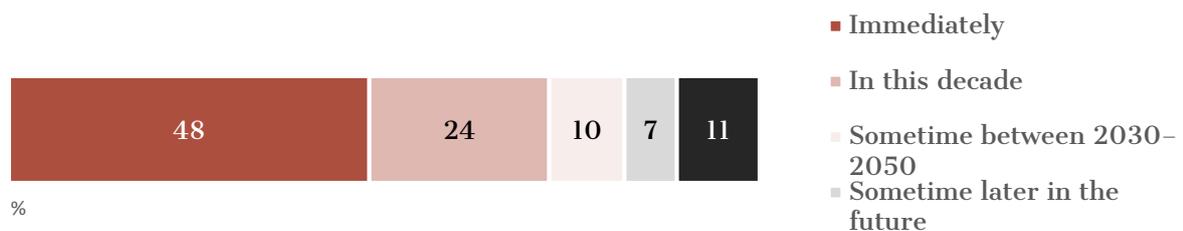
"ARE IDEAS OF NATURE CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IMPORTANT FOR YOU, OR ARE THEY NOT?"



"WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CLAIMS ABOUT GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE IS CLOSEST TO YOUR OPINION?"



"IN WHAT TIME SPAN DO YOU THINK IT IS NECESSARY TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE?"



"Green" is not a problem — "Transformation" is

However, the low-carbon energy transformation process is a matter of some concern. People fear insecurity and becoming poorer. Their strongest concerns are economic ones, and in times of crises, they become more imminent than environmental ones. Moreover, they reverberate in society more strongly.

The European Green Deal decarbonisation plan is mostly ignored or feared by the Czech public. Only one in ten people say they have enough information on the Green Deal. The

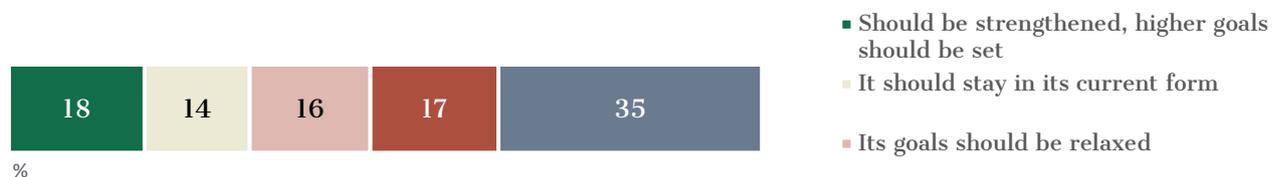
country is divided into thirds when it comes to trust: one-third would maintain or strengthen the Green Deal, one-third would relax or cancel it altogether, and one-third does not have any opinion.

Czechs can only associate the Green Deal with an improvement in air quality (56 %) and better rural conditions (55 %) but they **do not associate** it with an improvement in their economic situation. This is, especially today, a **severe shortcoming**.

"HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL?"



"WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL?"



"IT IS OFTEN SAID THAT IF WE ARE TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERABLY, OUR ECONOMY NEEDS A SUBSTANTIAL TRANSFORMATION AND MODERNISATION. THIS PLAN IS KNOWN AS THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL.

DO YOU THINK THAT THIS ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON LIFE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC?"

- IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS



- IN 10 TO 20 YEARS



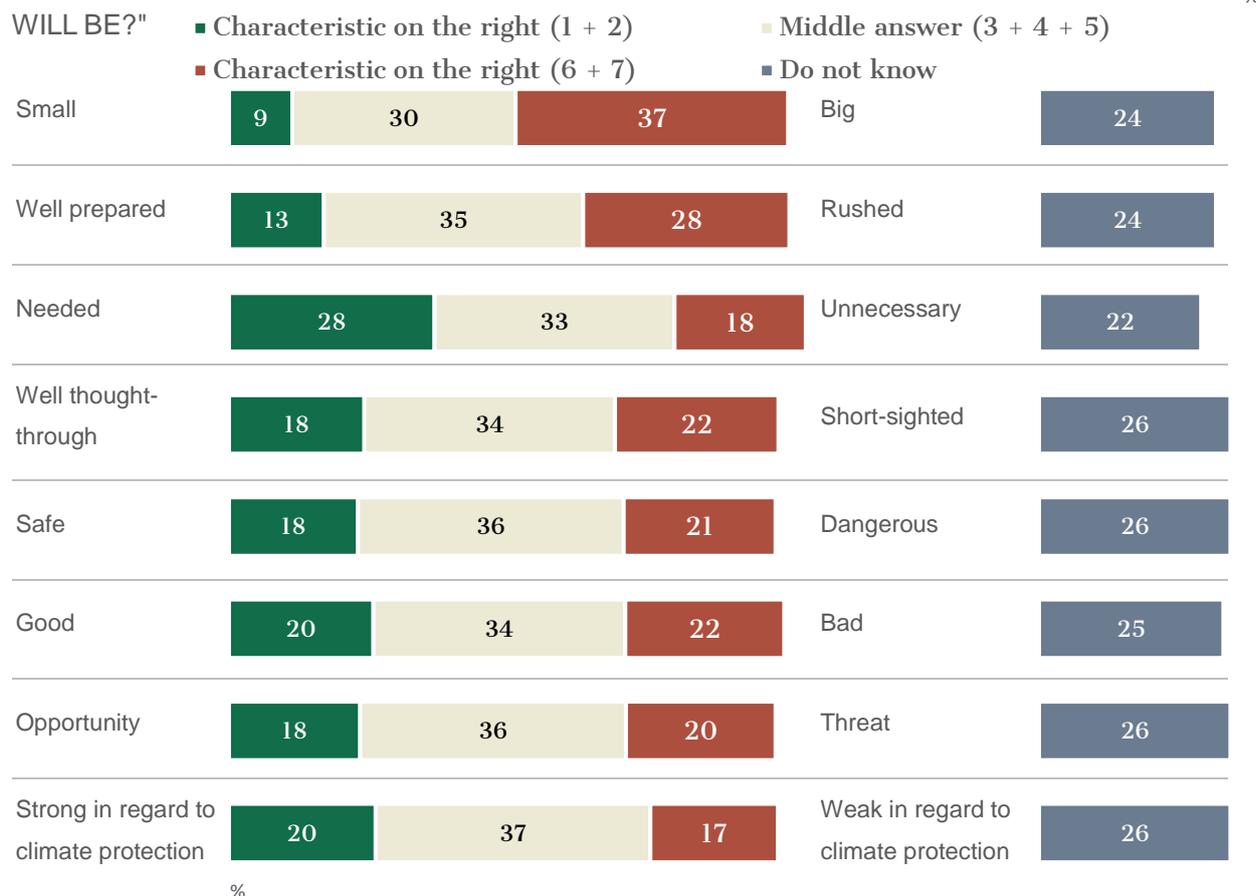
The Green Deal will bring a significant change, rather needed than unnecessary, but unfortunately, people expect it to be rushed and not necessarily well thought-through.

Respondents described their feelings and personal expectations related to the Green Deal using the semantic differential (agreement with one of the presented opinions on a 1–7 scale).

The results show that on average, people's attitudes to the Green Deal are not strong.

They, however, agree that it will bring a **major change**. The change is also seen as rather rushed but, at the same time, needed. The other characteristics are perceived less strongly even though people slightly tend to opt for the negative opinions

"IT IS OFTEN SAID THAT IF WE ARE TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERABLY, OUR ECONOMY NEEDS A SUBSTANTIAL TRANSFORMATION AND MODERNISATION. THIS PLAN IS KNOWN AS THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL. WHAT KIND OF CHANGE DO YOU THINK IT WILL BE?"



We support the nature, but we are afraid of the impacts

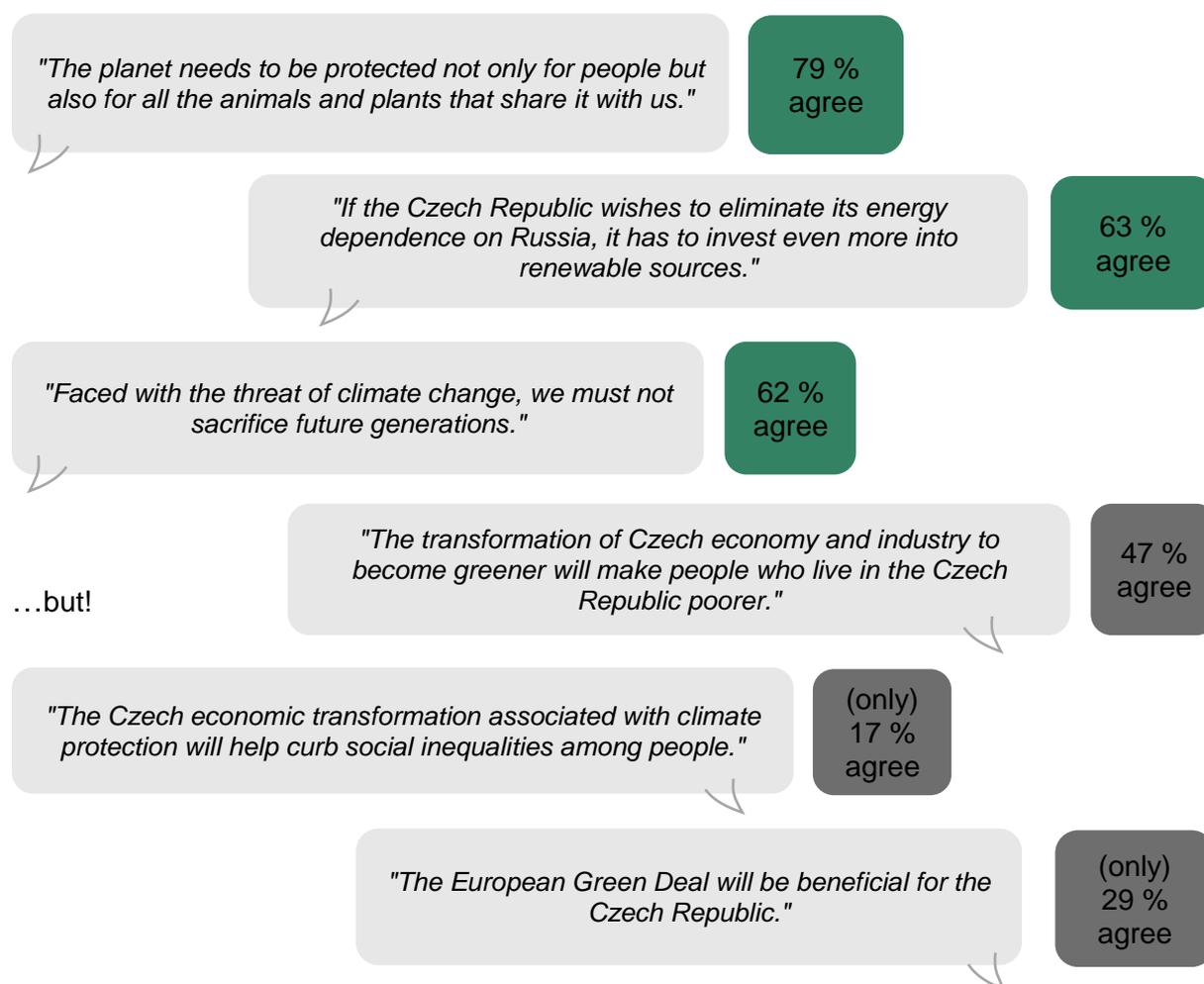
Concerning the communication of the topics of climate protection and green transformation, a wide range of narratives and statements was tested within the research. The identified attitudes to these statements showed possible directions of fostering and stimulating the discussion on green transformation. They also showed which topics should be minimised. Additionally, we can direct communication at varying segments better, based on the segmentation of attitudes to transformation.

The Czech public clearly believes that it is important to protect the planet not only for people but also for animals and plants. People also strongly emphasise the next

generations. Most people agree that the government should take measures to support the return of life (such as birds and insects) to the Czech countryside. People also think climate protection needs to be addressed even now, during the Ukraine crisis.

Again, the narratives confirm clear support for renewable energy sources and the importance of a joint EU action to curb emissions, in which the Czech Republic should participate.

By contrast, the public is rather strongly concerned with the socio-economic impact on people. To sum up, the Green Deal as such is not seen by the Czech people as a force for positive, beneficial change for the country.



Societal structure based on attitudes to transformation

Following the answers obtained in the research, Czech society was divided into groups based on their perceptions of transformation-related changes and opinions on the transformation. The analysis then identified six groups of different sizes in the society.

It turns out that the society is not unanimous, but it is not divided into only two camps either.

We can see several smaller groups being defined, just like on other complicated matters.

Different groups then naturally have different motivations for supporting the transformation or they face different barriers that prevent them from welcoming change.

Optimistic Supporters • 22 % • want change and are inclined towards taking more radical measures and can be mobilised. However, this group is generally not poor, and they often have financial resources.

Hesitant Supporters • 26 % • are cautious about the transformation. They care about the environment but are not willing to comply with all measures, especially if they feel threatened by them. They are not as willing to pay more for climate measures.

The Uncertain • 13 % • are not entirely decided. They are not as interested in politics, which is reflected in the fact that they do not have a strong opinion on political solutions to the climate crisis.

The Doubtful • 13 % • often are more settled citizens. They like nature, but their fear of economic changes makes them reject almost any systemic changes.

Opponents • 19 % • are very sceptical about measures to address climate change in general. They are sceptical of the EU and consider the regulations to fight against climate change to be exaggerated nonsense. They do not want to address transformation much because they think there are more important things to deal with.

The Indifferent • 7 % • are characterised by a low degree of interest in public affairs and they do not feel involved in them. They have no opinion on climate-related matters, know next to nothing about climate change, and are not motivated to know more. This group was excluded from the follow-up analyses because their weak opinion on almost anything related to the subject matter did not allow for a representative indication of their opinions.



Similar opinions, as well as differences, can be found across different groups

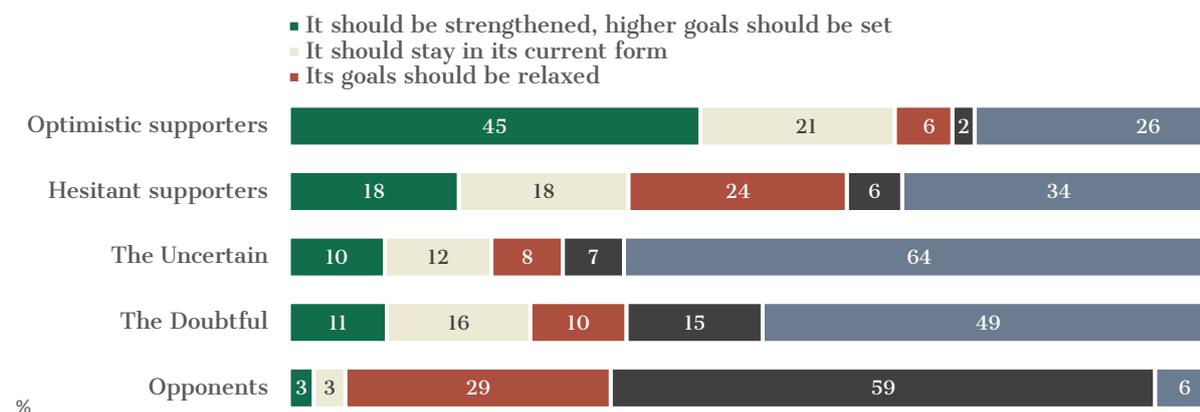
When considering the segmentation of attitudes to transformation, it is possible to identify the differences in opinions present in society to a deeper degree. It turns out that there is a consensus across different segments or that opinions do not differ that much on certain matters, such as the attitude to nature and the countryside and support of renewable resources.

This is the case mainly for very general opinions. However, on a more detailed level, such as the impact of the Green Deal on

different aspects of people's lives, it turns out that opinions vary much more in society. In this case, basically, only Optimistic Supporters maintain a positive attitude.

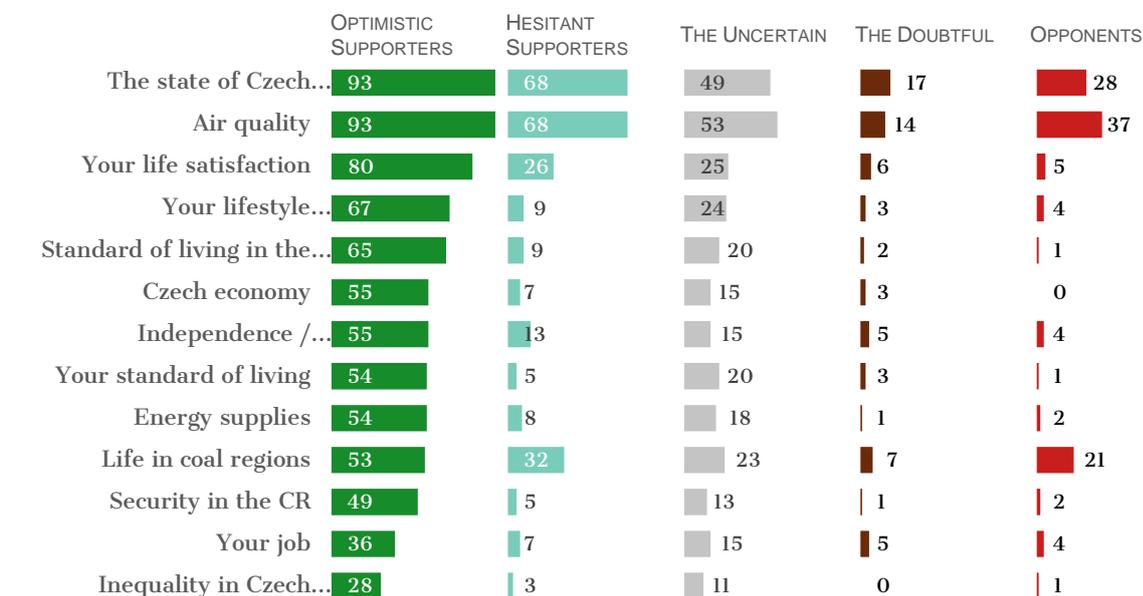
Paradoxically, the Opponents of the Green Deal claim to be the most familiar with it: 32 % state they are very familiar with the document. However, this claim is not necessarily well-founded. The group has firm opinions on the Green Deal, but the knowledge test does not show they understand the document much better.

"WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL?"



"THE GREEN DEAL. IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IMPACT WILL THIS PLAN HAVE IN INDIVIDUAL ASPECTS OF YOUR LIFE AND THE CZECH SOCIETY?"

- ANSWERS: "EXTREME IMPROVEMENT" + "IMPROVEMENT" + "MILD IMPROVEMENT" COMBINED



%

Society supports renewable energy sources

Czech society supports RES. A significant majority want water, solar, as well as wind energy to be developed. After reputation issues around 2010, a positive public image of solar energy has been fully restored (the energy crisis related to the war in Ukraine has undoubtedly contributed to this).

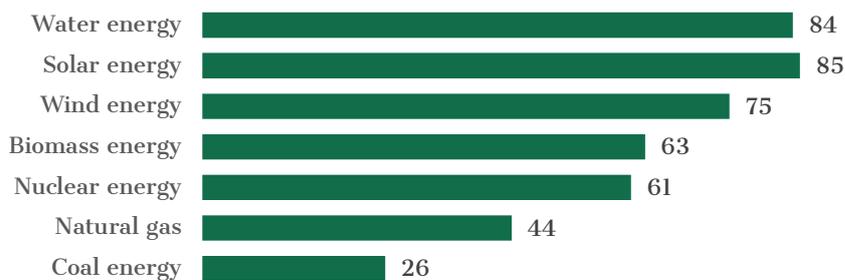
More than 4 in 5 people prefer water (84 %) and solar (82 %) energy as the primary energy sources. Three out of four Czech citizens (75 %) are also in favour of

supporting wind farms. Biomass and nuclear energy have roughly 60 % support (even though nuclear energy has a higher percentage of definite answers "Definitely yes"). 44 % of the respondents support natural gas. One in four people would not mind supporting of coal energy (26 %), but 41 % prefer to curb its support.

Nuclear energy is very much supported by Opponents (84 %, whereas it is only supported by 54 % of Optimistic Supporters).

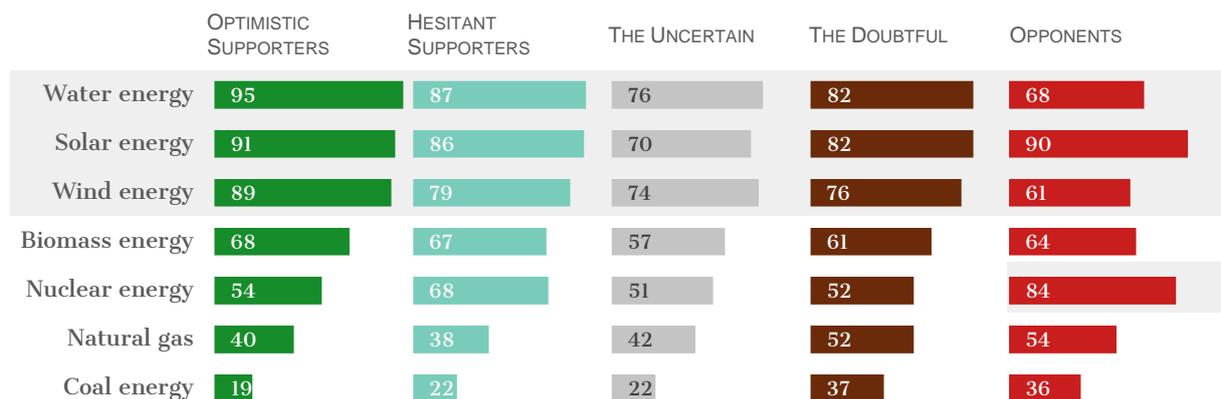
"IN YOUR OPINION, SHOULD THE FOLLOWING ENERGY AND HEAT SOURCES BE SUPPORTED OR RESTRICTED IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN THE FOLLOWING YEARS?"

- % SUPPORTED



%

BY THE SEGMENTATION OF THE ATTITUDES TO TRANSFORMATION



%

Which measures to take? Subsidies are good, but restrictions and taxes are bad!

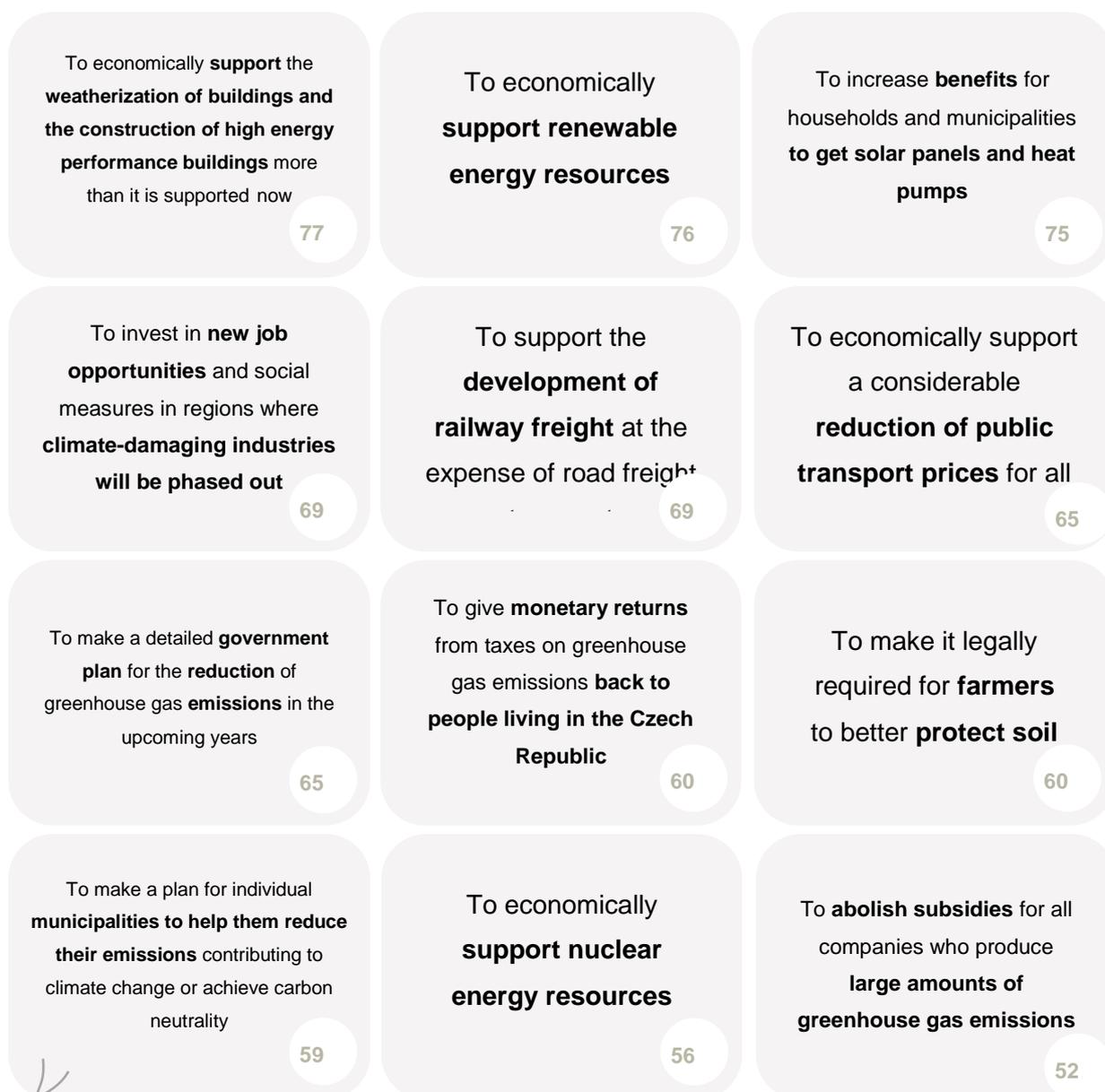
The survey asked respondents about 25 possible measures to fight the climate crisis.

People generally agree with anything provided that it is a **supportive** measure. This means a subsidy, a contribution or another form of benefit. By contrast, repressive measures in the form of both restrictions and fees/taxes are considerably

less popular, regardless of what precisely the particular measures regulate.

This shows that the public is not opposed to possible government efforts to fight climate change by measures and policies; the easiest way is **to use benefits and subsidies as they are the least controversial matter.**

Measures supported by the overall majority of the public



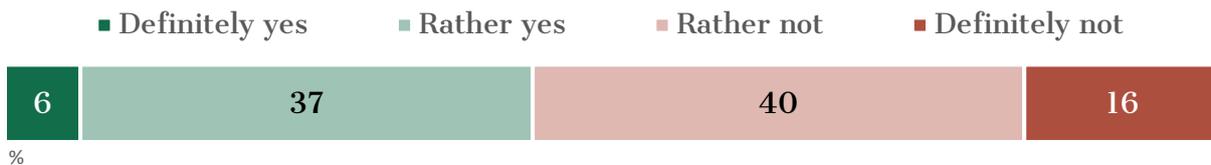
People are ready to take action personally, but there often are major barriers

No more than about half of society feels informed enough about the ways an individual can try to reduce their personal emissions.

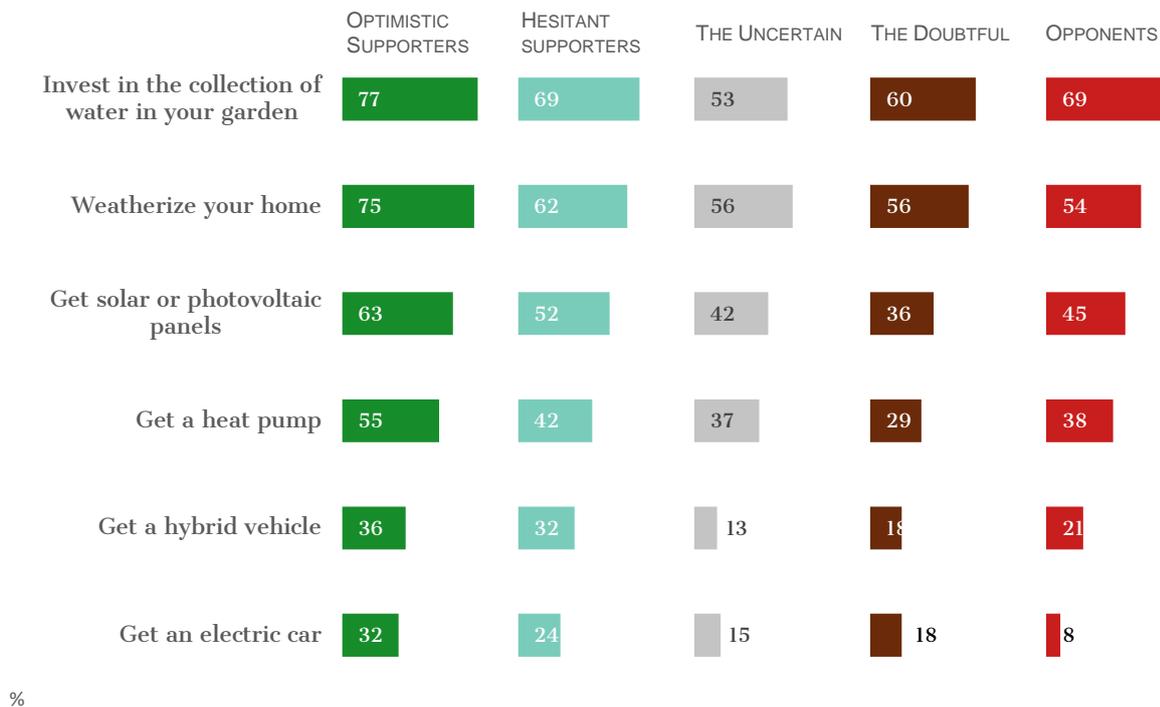
Looking at specific individual possibilities, we can see a rule: "I support anything that will help me save money". People also generally support things they can imagine (water collection, home weatherisation).

Electromobility is still controversial in society; at the moment, not even people supporting transformation are considering buying an electric vehicle in the future. In addition, concerns about insufficient infrastructure and high purchase costs of electric cars also play their role.

"DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE AS MUCH INFORMATION AS YOU NEED ABOUT THE WAYS YOU CAN PERSONALLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE REDUCTION OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS?"

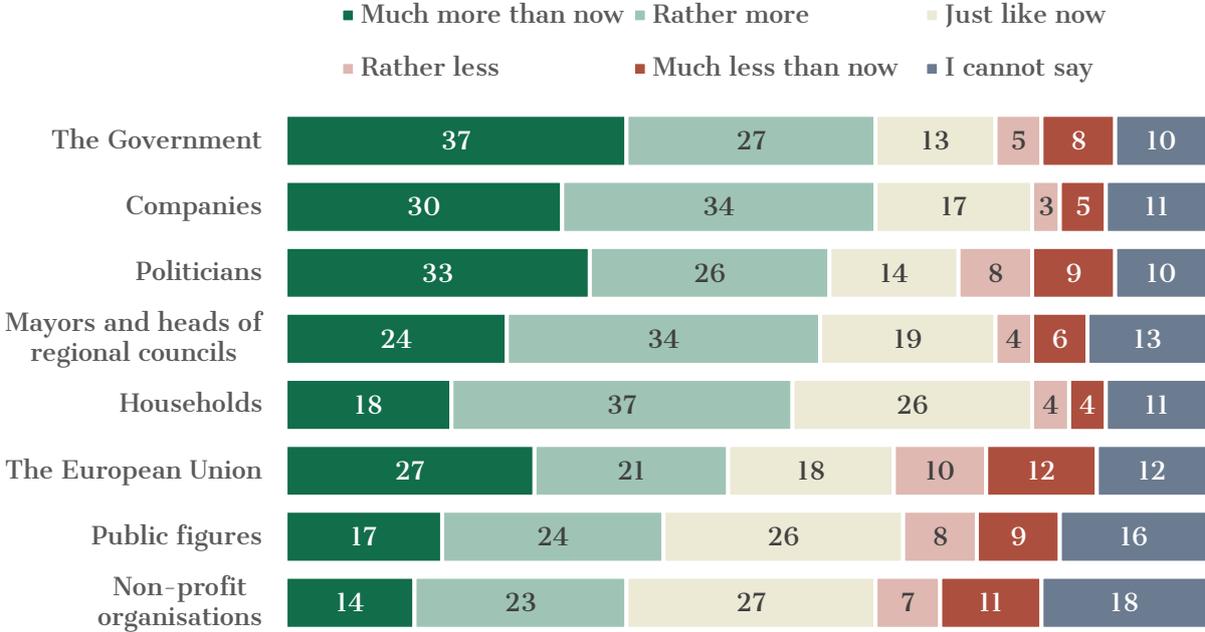


"HOW PROBABLE OR IMPROBABLE IS IT FOR YOU TO DO THE FOLLOWING IN THE FUTURE?"



"THE CZECH REPUBLIC, TOGETHER WITH OTHER EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES, HAS DECIDED TO FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGE ITS ECONOMY IN ORDER TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE AND MODERNISE ITS ECONOMY.

SHOULD THE FOLLOWING ENTITIES PARTICIPATE IN THIS PLAN MORE OR LESS THAN TO DATE?"



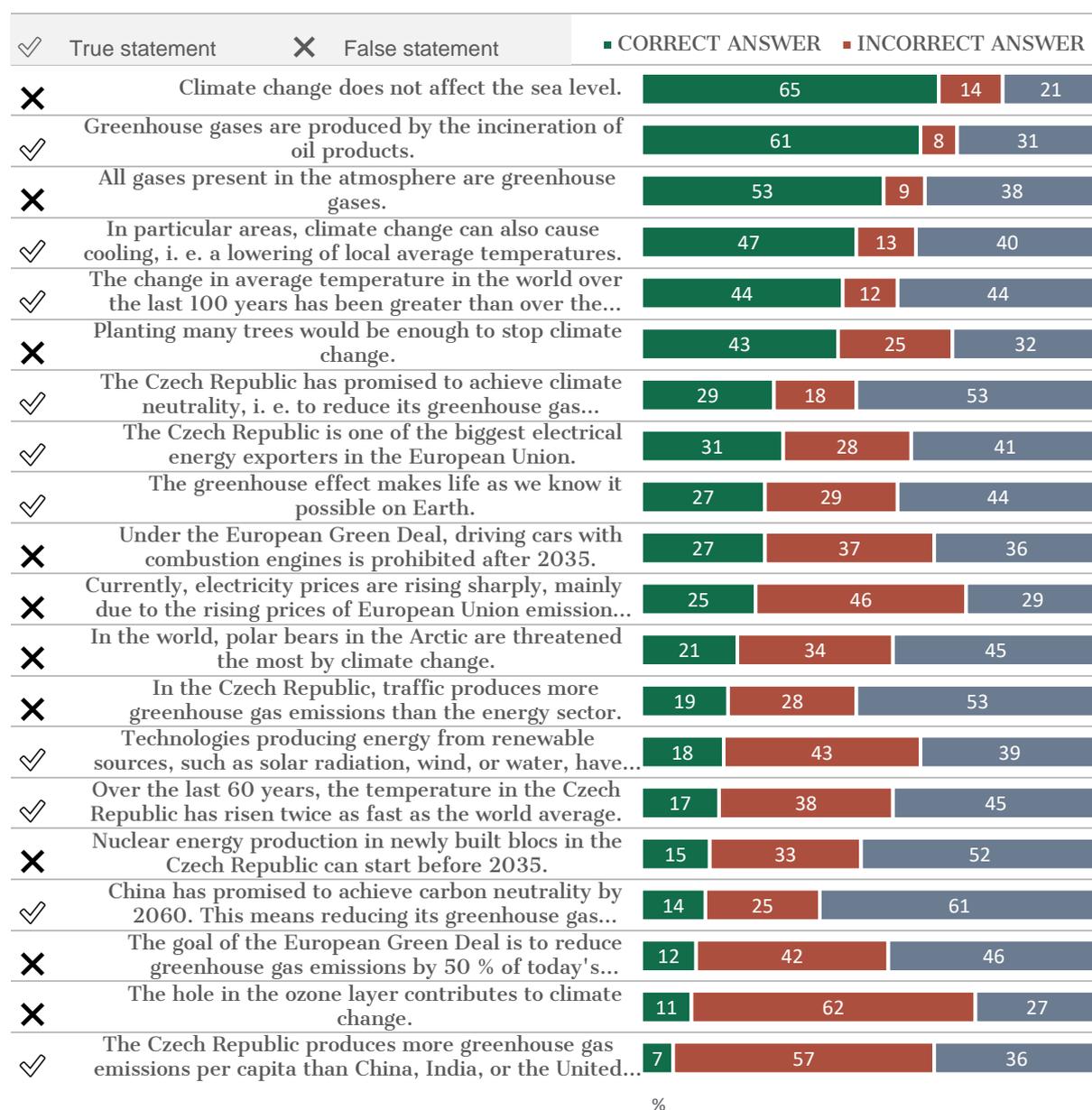
%

Test of knowledge about climate: The level of knowledge in society is relatively low

The research has also tested what people knew about climate change. The results show that a considerable part of society does not know the answers and cannot find the right answer if they try.

The respondents answered correctly mainly on trivial questions such as whether climate change affects the sea level (65 % answered

correctly that there is an effect). However, only a very small percentage of people answered the more complicated questions correctly. Less than one in ten people (7 %) confirmed that the Czech Republic produced more greenhouse gases per capita than China, India, or the United Kingdom. On the contrary, almost 3 in 5 people (57 %) said this statement was false.



%