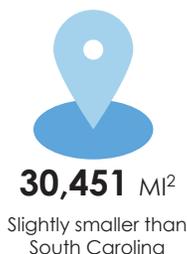


CZECH REPUBLIC

Czechia is a landlocked country bordering Germany, Austria, Poland, and Slovakia. Czechia is a member state of the European Union but maintains its own currency, the koruna. It boasts a highly developed, export-oriented economy with advanced industry centered on manufacturing and research. Modern Czechia spans the territory of historical Bohemia. Following the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, Czechia became a part of the Austrian Empire and, after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, became the Republic of Czechoslovakia. While the country remained democratic during the interwar period, the Czech portion fell under German control in World War II, with the Slovak region becoming the Slovak Republic. In the wake of the war, Czechia became part of the Soviet Union and remained occupied until the 1989 Velvet Revolution. Czechia is a popular European tourist destination, with Prague, the capital city, the fifth most-visited in Europe. Czechia is also known for its spa towns, castles, and cathedrals.



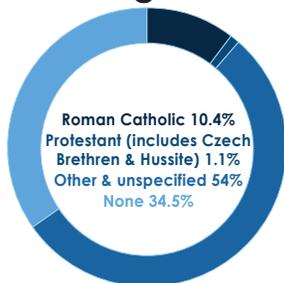
Population
10,686,269



Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

A typical household consists of parents and children, two on average. Grandparents and other relatives may live in the same home, but not usually. As the country is relatively small, inter-generational visits may take place often, and grandparents may be involved in childcare. Parents often cook for their children even when they are teenagers. Parent involvement varies by family. Some parents are involved in their children's extracurricular activities and children may have a number of them during the week, but this is not the norm in most families. Other parents may be less actively involved.

It is considered normal for family members to have time to themselves to pursue their own activities, socialize with friends, or to simply relax. Teenagers will often spend time alone in their rooms and expect privacy. Teenagers are expected to do chores at home. Some families assign chores based on gender, while others do not. Girls would be expected to do laundry or wash dishes, while boys would be expected to shovel snow. Girls are more expected to cook than boys. Gender roles are more entrenched in Czech society, especially in small towns and the countryside.

FRIENDSHIP

Teenagers sometimes socialize in groups, and sometimes one-on-one. Both are considered appropriate. It is perfectly acceptable for teens to have friends of the opposite sex and to socialize with them one-on-one. Teenagers usually make friends through school and extracurricular activities but some also have their neighbors (with whom they may attend the same school) and cousins (if they happen to live in the same town) as close friends. The term "friend" is usually reserved for very close relationships. Czechs, including teenagers, would not refer to someone whom they know only in passing as a friend.

SCHOOL LIFE

High school students typically have 8-10 core subjects and several electives. Classes are usually 45 minutes long. Some subjects meet three times a week, some twice, and some just once. High school students are used to being examined orally in front of their class. They are evaluated on written tests, papers, or other types of projects. Participation in class is not commonly part of their grade. Students are in the same group of roughly 30 pupils throughout their secondary school studies. They have a class teacher assigned to their class and take core subjects together. All subjects are studied at the same level of difficulty. They tend to form close bonds within their group, but they

also mix with students from other classes, especially when taking electives. Boys and girls study together. In general, the public school education system is more centralized than the U.S. school system.

Extracurricular activities are often outside of school. Students may be involved in a sports club outside of school and form friendships there as well as in school.

FOOD

Contemporary Czech cuisine features meat heavily, and a meal consists of two or more courses (soup, main dish, dessert). There are many thick soups and types of sauces, as well as baked meats with gravies.

Many Czechs will offer drink or food to their guests and will repeat their offer once or twice, but will not force food and drink on guests if they decline. Simple drink and food (coffee, teas, crackers) are offered to someone whose visit was not planned or is meant to be short. The exception could be families living in the villages of southern Moravia, a more traditional, conservative, and rural region in the country's southeast. People there are known for their hospitality and may force food and drink on their guests. They also expect the same kind of hospitality when visiting someone else.

Most teenagers make or buy a snack to eat during one of the morning breaks at school. While teenagers buy chips, such food is seen as junk and some parents disapprove of their children eating it. A warm lunch is typically served at a school cafeteria and usually consists of two courses: soup and the main meal. Dinner is often lighter. Some families may eat a warm dinner while others have a cold dinner such as an open-face sandwich.

RELIGION

Czechs are largely secular. Most are atheist or agnostic and do not attend any church services. Most churches are Catholic, largely traditional, and do not serve as community centers.

Despite the country's largely secular nature, Christmas is the most important family holiday. It is celebrated on Christmas Eve when families have dinner and then open presents under the Christmas tree. In a similar tradition to Austria and Germany, small children believe that their presents are brought by the baby Jesus, not Santa Claus. Christmas dinner usually consists of carp fried in a coating of flour, eggs, and bread crumbs similar to schnitzel, and is served with potato salad. Czechs also bake several types of Christmas cookies and braided sweet bread.

PERSONAL CARE

Most people wear the same clothes twice if they are clean. Many will change their shirts and blouses every day but may wear the same pair of jeans or pants twice. Teenagers shower daily, or more often if they do sports or during the summer. Most people have one towel in the bathroom that is used to dry off after showering. The same towel may be used more than once before it is washed. Teenagers usually do not dress up for school. They wear whatever is fashionable—jeans, shirts, hoodies, and leggings. In some families, clothes like jeans and shirts are ironed by mothers or daughters. High schools usually do not have dress codes, but some schools require students to wear uniforms.



The Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. FLEX provides competitively selected secondary school students from 21 countries in Europe and Eurasia with the opportunity to spend the academic year in the U.S. living with a volunteer host family and attending a host high school. Begun in 1993, FLEX now has over 27,000 alumni.