

# Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

<b>Student:</b>	<b>Štěpán Čejka</b>
<b>Advisor:</b>	<b>PhDr. Miroslav Palanský, Ph.D.</b>
<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	<b>Let the young vote: Potential effects of lowering the voting age on elections in Czechia</b>

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

### Short summary

The thesis aims at first estimating the potential election turn-out of 15-17 year-olds in the Czech Republic, and then based on their voting preferences deciding whether allowing this age group to vote would impact recent Czech elections.

### Contribution

The thesis has very ambitious goals when it sets out to cover a very dynamic topic, as political preferences are ever-shifting, especially of late in the Czech Republic. While the research question matters significantly for the future of Czech politics, as youth voting is also one of the questions that are being discussed, the novelty of the research seems somewhat overestimated.

The thesis could serve as a start of a larger research project or an opening of a discussion, however, due to shortcomings discussed below, it would not be able to serve in its current form as a reliable reference to a policymaker trying to estimate the actual election results should young adults get the vote. Improving the methods applied could however be a fruitful area for further research.

### Methods

The author rightly mentions non-stationarity, multicollinearity and other possible assumption violations that could skew the results, and mentions relevant tests (consider including those in the body of the thesis?). Tests between various methods are also conducted.

The used methods are appropriate for bachelor's level thesis. The difference between random and fixed effects are discussed, yet some of the sections of the methodology, especially when introducing variables and new empirical approaches, would benefit from more deeper introduction for clarity and to show real understanding of the method.

Some of the assumptions about the approach seem not very credible and are not discussed in the limitations sections – students in student election often have other motivations to vote: they evade class, or are forced or incentivized to. Similarly, their voting patterns might not be reliable for real election, as they are „trolling“ in the student ones, but being more serious in an actual election. This all could be detrimental to your method.

### Literature

The citation style is consistent throughout the document, however some of the claims in the thesis as well as the methods and data should be better referenced. The results of the Turnitin analysis do not indicate any larger text similarity with other available sources.

Be careful about strong statements about past literature. Rather than stating that voter turn-out decreases due to people starting independent lives later, say which author claims that, or that there is evidence that this is a factor – as it surely will not be the only explanation! Be sure to reference all factual claims – you cannot say „some researchers claim“ without references.

The literature section itself could be more extensive. For instance, you do not look into sources trying to examine likely voting patterns of people who currently cannot vote, as would be most relevant for you – you only speculate based on how the change worked out only after 15-17 voting was allowed. Is there a chance that alone could have influenced their preferences?

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## Manuscript form

The manuscript is overall well formatted, logically structured, mostly easy to navigate in a clean and uniform style, and properly referenced.

A few minor notes I would make is to be more careful about run-away sentences, when only one or two lines occupy an entire page. In a few cases, mind the consistency of your referencing style. Similarly, check how to properly capitalize headings in English. In a few cases, more proofreading could result in more clarity – such as in the abstract, when it at first is unclear what age group you are specifically looking at.

Regarding the structure of the manuscript, one suggestion is that while you should definitely include your key findings in the abstracts, they do not need to be present in the Introduction section – that should mainly serve to give reasons for your inquiry.

As mentioned in the section on methodology, please, specify your models better. The „the model follows this general form“ approach is not acceptable. If you used squared independent variables, that could still be understood as „following the same general form“, yet would have impact on your results.

This is connected to changing notation. Your independent and dependent variables in equations 1,2, and 3 are different, yet are noted similarly. On page 22, you also wrongly refer to equation (4), and it's hard to guess which one is the correct one you had in mind if all of them have the same notation. This is all very confusing for the reader. Tables with results are unclearly presented – it seems as if you were using the same variables as independent and dependent variables.

## Overall evaluation and suggested questions for the discussion during the defense

While there are improvements to be made on both the technical and formal side, the thesis shows understanding of tools appropriate to what is expected from a bachelor's level student, and their mostly relevant use on a topic of importance. More thought could be devoted to the context of the application of the method in the framework of the chosen topic.

The thesis well fulfills the requirements for a bachelor thesis at the Institute of Economic Studies, and I therefore recommend it for the defense and suggest a grade B. For the defense, I would suggest more discussion on the following issues:

- Did you think of the problem of “trolling” in student election, which would invalidate it as a reliable source for extrapolation of voting preferences for the whole student population? Similarly, did you think of considering how the fact that some schools mandate or heavily incentivize students to join the student election could influence what students with what political preferences would vote?
- As an alternative method to considering student election results of the current group, have you considered using a survey of voters in the youngest category instead? Would a comparison be possible between the students voting in student elections in the previous cycle, and the youngest voters in the next cycle for the same election type (so presumably same sample of voters) to see how their voting pattern changed with gaining the right to vote?

**SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED** (for details, see below):

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<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<i>Contribution (max. 30 points)</i>	25
<i>Methods (max. 30 points)</i>	25
<i>Literature (max. 20 points)</i>	15
<i>Manuscript Form (max. 20 points)</i>	16
<b>TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>GRADE (A – B – C – D – E – F)</b>	<b>B</b>

**NAME OF THE REFEREE:** Jan Mošovský

**DATE OF EVALUATION:** 23.8. 2023

*Digitálně podepsáno (23. 8. 2023)  
Jan Mošovský*

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**Referee Signature**

**EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES AND SCALE:**

**CONTRIBUTION:** *The author presents original ideas on the topic demonstrating critical thinking and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and empirics. There is a distinct value added of the thesis.*

**METHODS:** *The tools used are relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the author's level of studies. The thesis topic is comprehensively analyzed.*

**LITERATURE REVIEW:** *The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and command of recent literature. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way.*

**MANUSCRIPT FORM:** *The thesis is well structured. The student uses appropriate language and style, including academic format for graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables and disposes with a complete bibliography.*

**Overall grading:**

TOTAL	GRADE
91 – 100	A
81 - 90	B
71 - 80	C
61 – 70	D
51 – 60	E
0 – 50	F