The impact of closed and flexible candidate lists on the representation of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic[1]

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Abstract: *This article addresses the impact of closed and flexible candidate lists on the representativeness of the lower house of the Czech Parliament from 1996 to 2021. Specifically, the paper explores representativeness according to gender, profession, residence, education, age and political experience. The effectiveness of preferential votes has manifested only since the electoral reform in 2010, mainly in the representativeness of women. Other monitored variables had a more pronounced influence, mainly in 2010 and 2013, when various citizen initiatives called for a change in the existing political set, and the new political parties disrupted the party system. Or when the voters of the PirStan coalition preferred the candidates of the STAN at the expense of the candidates of the Pirates in 2021.*

Keywords: ***closed candidate list, flexible candidate list, the Czech Republic, Personalization***

I. Introduction

The voters in democratic countries choose their representatives through elections. How much the voters influence the election of their representatives mainly depends on the setting of the electoral system, which can be divided in its most

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basic form into majority, proportional or mixed, and on the other hand by the setting of candidate lists. From the point of view of candidate lists, we can talk about closed candidate lists, where voters do not have the opportunity to influence the order on the candidate list. Furthermore, this are flexible candidate lists, where the voter can grant several preferential votes and thereby show his initiative in selecting candidates. The last type is open candidate lists, where voters choose from a list of candidates between candidates arranged alphabetically. In the presented text, I focus on the proportional electoral system with flexible candidate lists used in elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. I focus on the impact of closed and flexible candidate lists on the representativeness of the lower house of the Czech Parliament from 1996 to 2021. Within this comparison, I can determine the benefit of preferential voting for the represented interests (with regard to political representation) such as gender, residence, education, occupation or age (Atkeson 2003; Caul 1999; Dovi 2010; Goodin 2004; Krook – O'Brien 2010; Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1998; Piktin 1972; Sapiro 1981; Squires 1996; Williams 1998; Young 1990).

The recent research analyses (see below) the characteristics that lead to greater preferential votes. However, it deals only to a limited extent (Kneblová 2010, 2014) with elected deputies who won a mandate thanks to preferential votes and their influence on the representativeness of the Chamber of Deputies. So, it is still unclear what characteristics (gender, education, age, place of residence, occupation) are typical for candidates who obtained enough preferential votes to get a parliamentary mandate. But why should this type of research be important? The reason is twofold. First, this is a missing part of the mosaic of previous research connected with preferential votes in the elections to the Chamber of Deputies. Additionally, the MP's performance (speech, interpellation and voting) is influenced by his age, gender, education, profession and by previous political experience mainly connected with the parliamentary mandate (Balík et al. 2019). It is, therefore, essential to determine which candidates obtain a mandate through preferential voting, as this fact directly affects the composition of the Chamber of Deputies and its activities.

In the same way, the selection of individual candidates can be linked to a potential increase in the representativeness (gender, profession, residence, education, age and political experience) of the Chamber of Deputies, as those elected receive the most preferential votes, and their voters can feel better represented. The concept of descriptive representation is closely related to this, described in more detail by Hana Pitkin (1972). Simply put, it is the representation of persons by representatives who resemble them in personal characteristics.

I examine these questions by comparing the composition of the Chamber of Deputies regarding the current situation where voters can use a few preferential votes in the situation where voters do not have this option. How would the composition of the Chamber of Deputies differ? Would more people with

a specific gender, place of residence or profession be elected? Does the possibility of granting preferential votes guarantee the representation of marginalised groups in society or persons with typical characteristics? The research presented contributes to the understanding of the influence of preferential votes on the composition of the representative body.

II. Theoretical background – personalisation of the electoral system

The authors Rahat and Shefaer (2007) make a distinction between institutional, media and behavioural types of political personalisation. To the initial trigger changes in institutional settings, mass media subsequently respond by giving more space and emphasis to individuals over parties. Subsequently, politicians change their behaviour and emphasise their person over the political party (see Rahat and Shefaer 2007). In this work, I deal more closely with the institutional setting, specifically the formal rules (closed/open candidate lists, rules for recounting votes, the number of preferential votes, the size of districts, etc.[2]) associated with preferential votes (Bräuninger 2013). The personalisation of the electoral system is mainly related to the openness of candidate lists and the size of districts (Carey – Shugart 1995), possibly the ratio of the number of candidates fielded to the number of seats a party is likely to win (Crisp et al. 2007). Personalisation is associated with the situation where the election campaign is between individual parties but also between candidates of one political party. Personalisation is also associated with a greater emphasis on individuals than on the party itself and other institutions and local than national interests (e.g., Karvonen 2010; Pedersen and Rahat 2021). In addition, candidates try to build their reputation for their election at the expense of their fellow party members and the party (Carey – Shugart 1995).

However, a greater emphasis on persons may not mean extreme intra-party competition, as candidates may come from different areas or emphasise shared characteristics/interests (Cheibub and Sin, 2020). Alternatively, the party can prevent this rivalry between candidates through its capital or strategy when compiling candidate lists (Crisp et al. 2013, Cheibub and Sin 2020). Parties also try to use the familiarity, local political experience or birthplace of specific candidates who can attract fickle voters (Crisp et al. 2013; Shugart et al. 2005), which can cause a greater individualism towards the party in Parliament (Cantor – Herrnson 1997; Sieberer 2010; Tavits 2009, 2010; Kam 2009; Heidar 2006). In the Czech Republic, the preferentially elected MPs support the party line (Smrek 2023), and parties demand responsibility towards the party from their MPs under the threat of not including the MPs in elective positions (Däu-

2 Carey and Shugart (1995) mention ballot control, vote pooling, types of votes and district magnitude.

bler et al. 2018). The parties have also used the ministers to maximise electoral gains in a specific constituency (Dvořák – Pink 2022). The leaders also got the most preferential votes in place of their residence in 2006 (Voda – Pink). Research also looks at the nomination process of political parties and the influence of preferential votes from past elections. These votes can push a candidate up to a better position (André et al. 2017) but still not to the realistic position (guaranteeing election) of the candidate list (Put et al. 2021).

In the same way, when choosing candidates voters can rely on the heuristics of individual candidates such as name, titles, sex, age, residence, political affiliation and profession or acquaintance of the candidate (Dodeigne and Pilet 2021, Lebeda 2009; Voda 2012). The research also focused on the number of preferential votes for women and minorities (Erzeel – Caluwaerts 2015; Fulton 2014; Holli – Wass 2010; Negri 2018; Marien et al. 2017; Peskowitz 2019). In the Czech Republic, women received more preferential votes in elections than men (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022). The main reason for the insufficient representation of women in the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic is party factors (position on the list of candidates), the number of preferential votes and the too-high threshold for moving a female candidate through the candidate list (ibid.).

Voters can also vote according to the so-called 'donkey vote' and give preferential votes to the first or last candidates (Brockington 2003; King and Leight 2009; Reynolds – Steenbergen 2006). The first is the effect of satisfaction when the voter judges the candidate according to whether he meets his requirements. As the number of candidates increases, the voter is more willing to support the candidates in the leading positions (primacy effect). The second is the recency effect, where the voter judges the candidates based on whether they can be associated with something the voter does not require from the candidate. However, as the number of candidates increases, the voter becomes more benevolent and is more likely to choose candidates at the bottom of the candidate list (Miller – Krosnick 1998).

In the example of Slovakia, with an increasing number of persons on the candidate list, the primacy effect becomes more pronounced so that the first candidate will receive more preferential votes in a larger constituency than in a small one. Conversely, the recency effect is more noticeable in smaller constituencies, as voters tend to go through the entire list of candidates (Spáč 2016). Dodeigne and Pilet (2021) also talk about the elitisation of intra-party electoral competition when 5–10 candidates (defenders of the mandate, party chairman or minister) receive the majority of preferential votes on the candidate list.

III. What affects the impact of preferential votes?

The first parameter is the number of preferential votes. Simplistically, the more votes a voter has, the more noticeable the impact of preferential votes. At the

same time, the voluntariness of granting preferential votes and the fact whether the voter must use all or only a part of the possible preferential votes are essential (Spáč 2011). The second factor, the size of the constituency, is linked to the number of candidates on the candidate list. As the number of candidates on the candidate list increases, the possibility that the order of candidates determined by the party will change decreases. This is due to the fact that preferential votes are divided among more candidates (Lebeda 2004; Spáč 2011). The same conclusion was reached by Eva Kneblová (2010, 2014) when she found that the average number of preferential votes for individual candidates depended on the size of the constituency. The smaller the constituency (number of mandates), the more preferential votes the candidates receive. The third parameter is a threshold allowing a shift on the candidate list, expressed for all candidates by a specific number or share of votes, or a threshold defined between the candidate and the party. The principle of obtaining a percentage of the votes obtained by the nominating party or the quota is most often used. However, with the increase of this clause, the candidate's chance to move to higher positions guaranteeing election worsens (Spáč 2011). Eva Kneblová (2010, 2014) also mentions that with the smaller parties (gaining 1–2 mandates), preferential votes had a more substantial influence on the election of a specific person than for large parties, which gained a significantly higher number of mandates. In non-parliamentary parties, voters used preferential votes less often than in parliamentary parties (Kneblová 2010, 2014).

Merging parties into coalitions also increases the number of preferential votes because the candidates of coalition parties compete for mandates as part of the intra-coalition competition (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022; Marsh 1985; Millard – Popescu 2004; Spáč 2011; Vartazaryan and Škultéty 2022; Voda 2012; Wildgen 1985). This argument confirms the most recent work on the influence of preferential votes within the SPOLU and PIRSTAN electoral coalitions (Hruška – Balík 2022). Within the SPOLU coalition, the most fundamental factor for winning preferential votes was the different characteristics of the member basis of the coalition parties or individual characteristics (candidate familiarity). For the PirStan coalition, the candidate's characteristics, the candidate's occupation (mayor) and the size of the party, measured by party support, played a role. Voters also preferred the candidates of the STAN movement in the first four places of the candidate list in most constituencies (except Prague and the Ústí Region).

Petr Voda (2010, 2014) used regression analysis to determine important factors influencing support for individual candidates. Specifically, the number of preferential votes for the candidate was influenced by the ordinal number. That is, when the candidate's support decreased as the ordinal number increased, until the last four places, where this support was remained high. For most parties, it was also evident that a candidate with a higher education and defending a mandate receives a higher share of preferential votes. For other

characteristics, such as age, gender, place of residence or occupation, it was not possible to determine a uniform trend across all political parties (Voda 2010, 2014). Haase-Formánková et al. (2022) confirmed that candidates defending the mandate, the higher educated (docents and professors), and women obtained more preferential votes. Candidates over 70 got fewer preferential votes.

Leaders of candidate lists and persons in leading positions also receive the most votes (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022; Späč 2011). The year 2010 was different from the previous elections. In this year, more people were elected from the last four places on the candidate list, which could be related to citizen initiatives calling for a change in the current political set (Kneblová 2010). According to Kneblová, the possible influence of citizen initiatives is unclear (2014). On the other hand, candidates who signed up for the Reconstruction of States initiative in 2013 achieved approximately twice the number of preferential votes than those candidates who did not sign up for the initiative (Voda 2012).

The preferential voting in elections to the Chamber of Deputies 1996–2021

Research in the Czech Republic focuses on the use and impact of preferential votes at all levels, whether municipal (Kopřiva 2012; Lebeda 2009; Šedo 2009), regional (Voda 2012), or in elections to the Chamber of Deputies (André et al. 2017; Haase-Formánková et al. 2022; Balík – Hruška 2022; Kneblová, 2010, 2014; Kudrna 2010; Kyloušek 2006; Morkes 2007; Smrek 2023; Späč 2011; Vartazaryan and Škultéty 2022; Voda 2010, 2013; Voda – Pink 2009). Changes in the electoral system[3] in the elections to the Chamber of Deputies are summarised in Table 1. However, the modification of the closing clause for coalitions also appears to be significant. The two-member coalitions had to achieve at least 7%, three-member coalitions 9% and four or more members 11% of the total number of votes in 1992. The legislative amendment from 2002 set the closing clause at 10% for two-member coalitions, 15% for three-member coalitions and 20% for four or more member coalitions. This legal amendment reduced the willingness of political parties to join coalitions, which could also affect the very use of preferential votes. The most recent legislation amendment from 2021 reduced this clause to 8% for two-member coalitions and 11% for three or more member coalitions (CZSO). More favourable conditions immediately manifested when two coalitions, SPOLU (ODS, KDU-ČSL and TOP 09) and PirStan, were created in 2021.

3 It was found that 'moderate increases in list flexibility lead to more preference voting, whereas strong increases cause a drop' (Däubler 2020).

Table 1: Preferential Voting in Czech Electoral Law

Election years	Threshold for PV	Preferential votes per voter	Constituencies	Ballot
1996–1998	10%	4	8	Flexible-party list
2002–2006	7%	2	14	
2010–2021	5%	4		

Source: Vartazaryan and Škultéty 2022

Peter Spáč (2011) considers the electoral rules from 2010 as the most effective for using preferential votes and electoral rules from 2002 and 2006 as the least effective. Jan Kudrna (2010) agreed with this when he called the 7% threshold for preferential votes so strict that it degraded preferential voting. Other authors also mention preferential votes' limited influence (Outlý, 2003; Outlý – Prouza, 2013). In the case of the latest legislation, which is more favourable to coalitions, we can assume a further increase in the effectiveness of using preferential votes. However, it depends on the political parties' willingness to create coalitions.

IV. Methodology and hypotheses

Based on data from the Volby.cz server, I determined the list of deputies who formed the Chamber of Deputies immediately after the elections from 1996 to 2021 (eight elections), both from the point of view of closed and flexible candidate lists. I analyse the composition of the Chamber of Deputies based on variables such as gender, occupation, place of residence, age, education, party affiliation, defense of mandate and previous political experience. I obtained data (gender, occupation, place of residence, age, education) about candidates and respectively in the elections to the Chamber of Deputies from 1996 to 2021 from the server Volby.cz or the website of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic (CHDPCZ). I drew information related to the political experience of MPs from municipal, regional, senate, European or Czechoslovak elections (volby.cz), or the list of government members (vlada.cz). I determine the impact of closed candidate lists (N) as the difference between the current state (flexible candidate list (A)) and closed candidate lists (B). N = A – B. This calculation was applied to all investigated variables.

The number of women in the Chamber of Deputies has gradually increased since 1996, but it is still impossible to say that the individual gender is equally represented (Balík et al. 2019; Kouba et al. 2013; Rakušanová 2006). It is, therefore, necessary to find out whether preferential voting influences the increasing number of women, as claimed by Haase-Formánková et al. (2022). It is also essential to find out whether a higher number of preferential votes for more educated (docent, professor) and younger candidates (under 70) guarantees their

higher representation in the Chamber of Deputies (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022; Lebeda 2007; Voda 2010, 2014).

Regarding residence, voters identify best with a candidate living in the same area (Campbell-Cowley 2014; Cutler 2002; Key 1949). Voda and Pink (2009) found that the party leaders gain the most support near their residences. In contrast, leaders who run as candidates outside their region gain support across the entire region (constituency). Thus, a highly 'popular' person within a city or a municipality has a greater chance of succeeding and being elected, thanks to preferential votes. It is the place of residence that is important from the point of view of the potential influence of the elected member of Parliament on the development of their residence, whether in legislation or the so-called portioning of the bear (e.g., Grossman – Helpman 2005; Latner – McGann 2005; Hána 2013). I also assume that the number of deputies with residence in Prague will decrease over time; on the contrary, the number of deputies from district towns or smaller municipalities will increase, as evidenced by Mikešová and Kostelecký (2016) or in the example of government members by Dvořák et al. (2021). On the other hand, in the case of a strong position in the regional capital, a smaller number of places on the list of candidates, or a weak position of district and local cells of political parties, candidates from the capital of the region, i.e. the constituency, may be promoted to the top places on the list of candidates (Put 2016), which would subsequently lead to an increase in the number of deputies from regional towns in the case of candidate lists.

Within the profession of individual candidates, there is an evident predominance of people who make a living from politics, that is, people for whom politics has become the primary source of livelihood (Balík et al. 2019; Poláková – Kostelecký 2016). Because in the Czech Republic (Bernard – Čermák 2021; Hájek 2016, 2017; Ryšavý 2016) and other countries (Navaro 2009; Sandberg, 2013) politicians choose a gradual path in their political paths (from the municipal, through the regional, to the Chamber of Deputies), it can be expected that even persons elected thanks to preferential votes will fulfill this path. Most deputies also cumulate their parliamentary mandate with regional or municipal mandates (Bernard – Čermák, 2021; Hájek 2016, 2017; Ryšavý 2016). In addition, according to Ryšavý, the chance of being elected as a member of Parliament increases if the person holds a higher position at the regional level, as he is better known to the public (Ryšavý 2016). The chance also increases with the holding of multiple mandates, as the person gets more space in the media and is better known to voters (Smolková – Balík 2018). Likewise, the candidates who defend their seats in the Chamber of Deputies are most often elected (Balík et al. 2019). These candidates also get the most preferential votes (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022; Voda 2010, 2012, 2014) because they are nominated at the top of the candidate list (Ceyhan 2018; Gherghina – Chiru 2010; Chiru – Popescu 2017; Meserve et al. 2020; Put – Maddens 2013). Therefore, it can be assumed that

the persons who obtained the parliamentary mandate thanks to preferential votes will have municipal and regional experience. At the same time, they will be mayors, deputy mayors at the municipal level, and governors or deputies at the regional level. Many MPs in the Chamber of Deputies have prestigious professions (Poláková – Kostelecký 2016); Voda (2014) mentions the advantage in the number of preferential votes doctors obtain.

Individual variables are understood as follows. Gender is important in the number of women and men. In the case of occupation, other variables include whether the person held a higher public elected office (mayor and governor or their deputies, deputy, senator, member of the government, member of the European Parliament), lower public elected office (deputy mayor and municipal representative, regional representative), party/politician staff, self-employed, prestigious professions (doctor, lawyer, teacher, scientist, judge, policeman, firefighter, designer, private farmer, nurse and programmer (Tuček 2019), non-manual job, manual job, economically non-active and manager. In the case of multiple listed professions, the candidate's profile information is listed first on the list of candidates unless the person provides information related to a higher public position or a position associated with a political party/politician. In this case, the person is included in the appropriate category. For age, I classify people into categories: under 30 years, 31–40 years, 41–50 years, 51–60 years, and 61 and over. In terms of education, I monitor whether the person has a university education (through a degree), specifically a bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral or higher degree. From the point of view of residence, I am interested in whether the candidate came from Prague, a regional or district town, or other smaller municipalities.

Furthermore, it is important to determine whether the person was a member of a political party or a non-party member, whether he defended a parliamentary mandate, or what political experience ((elected or candidate at the level of the municipal, regional, European Parliament, Chamber of Deputies, Senate, or government, multiple office holding (MP, municipal and regional mandate)) they had before the election. At the municipal and regional level, I distinguish between the number of mayors/regional governors and deputy of mayors/deputy and representatives. In contrast, persons who were deputy mayors and then became mayors/regional governors are included only in the mayor/regional governor group. A similar logic is used for representatives in connection with the deputy mayor/deputy or mayor/governor categories. From the data collected in this way, it will be possible to determine which persons are elected using preferential votes and which would be elected exclusively based on the nomination of political parties.

As part of our research investigating the composition of the Chamber of Deputies according to closed and flexible candidate lists, I establish the following hypotheses based on the information mentioned above:

H1: The number of women in the Chamber of Deputies will be higher in the flexible candidate list, as women receive more preferential votes than men (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022). At the same time, men are more often placed in a realistic position within the candidate list (Ceyhan 2018; Put – Maddens 2013; Put et al. 2019; Put et al. 2021), and the only possibility of disrupting the order determined by the party is preferential votes.

H2: In terms of residence, it is possible to expect that the current flexible setting of candidate lists can help persons with considerable popularity in district towns or other municipalities with high electoral support for the given party. Due to smaller constituencies, the strong position of regional cities or the centralised leadership of some parties (ANO, SPD, VV), it can be expected that in the case of closed candidate lists, more people from regional cities would be elected.

H3: It is evident that people with more political experience often run in the elections for the Chamber of Deputies; they often defend their parliamentary mandate, which they declare by their profession on the list of candidates. Currently, among the MPs, defenders of the mandate with political experience from other levels of the political system, whether at the municipal or regional level, predominate. However, I also know from previous research that the persons at the top of the candidate list are often defenders of the mandate with political experience (Ceyhan 2018; Gherghina – Chiru 2010; Chiru – Popescu 2017; Meserve et al. 2020; Put – Maddens 2013). So, the closed candidate lists would guarantee the election of more persons defending the parliamentary mandate.

H4: The political parties nominate people under 60 to top positions on their candidate lists (Put – Maddens 2013; Put et al. 2019; Put et al. 2021). In addition, preferential votes are obtained by persons under 70 (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022). So, the preferential votes can increase the number of people over 61+.

H5: It is evident that candidates with a higher education get a larger number of preferential votes (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022; Lebeda 2007; Voda 2010, 2014), and the candidates with a university degree are nominated to the top positions on the candidate lists (Ceyhan 2018; Gherghina et al. 2010). So, the representativeness of the Chamber of Deputies would not change significantly if closed candidate lists were to apply.

H6: In larger constituencies (22 to 26 seats), the effectiveness of preferential votes is lower, so more candidates will be elected due to preferential votes in the middle (10–14 seats) and small (5 to 8 seats) constituencies.

V. Results

In total, 159 members of parliament won a mandate thanks to preferential votes.[4] The twelve MPs won the mandate in this way more than once, but despite their electoral success in the last elections, they were not placed in such a position that would 'guarantee' them to be nominated to the top of the candidate list. This situation partly confirms the conclusions of Put et. al (2019). The impact of individual changes associated with preferential voting was already slightly apparent in 2002, when, thanks to the formation of the KDU-ČSL and US-DEU coalition and increased constituencies, the number of candidates elected by preferential votes was slightly increased. However, reducing the number of preferential votes also prevented an increase in the effectiveness of preferential voting.

Efficiency only increased in 2010, when the number of preferential votes again increased to four, and at the same time, the threshold for preferential votes was reduced from 7% to 5%. At the same time, citizens' initiatives calling for a change in the government set also started to work. Similar repercussions can also be observed in 2013. The year 2017, on the other hand, was associated with a higher number of parties that succeeded in the elections. Since these parties obtained a minimum number of mandates in individual constituencies, preferential votes could significantly change the selection of specific candidates (Kneblová 2010

Table 2: Number of MPs elected by preferential votes by political party (the number of non-party members is shown in the bracket)

	1996	1998	2002	2006	2010	2013	2017	2021
KDU-ČSL	0	1 (1)	9	0	0	3	2	7 (2)
US-DEU	0	1	2 (1)	0	0	0	0	0
ODS	0	0	1	1	17	4	9 (1)	1 (1)
ČSSD	0	0	0	1	10	9 (2)	3	0
KSČM	0	0	0	3 (1)	5 (2)	6	3	0
VV (2x SNK ED)	0	0	0	0	4 (1)	0	0	0
TOP 09 (2010 1x SLK)	0	0	0	0	11 (6)	2 (1)	3 (1)	2
ANO 2011	0	0	0	0	0	5 (2)	5 (1)	3
SPD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
STAN (2021 (1x SLK)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	22
Czech Pirate Party	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (1)	0
Total number of MPS	0	2	12	5	47	29	28	36
Non-partisans	0	1	1	1	9	5	4	3

Source: Volby.cz, author's own calculations

4 Contrary to Kneblová's claim (2010), however, I claim that in 2006 only five people were elected thanks to preferential votes (Ladislav Skopal was elected in the South Moravian Region for the ČSSD due to one person dropping out of the candidate list) and in 2010 Josef Novotný was elected by preferential votes for ČSSD in the Karlovy Vary Region out of 13 places on the candidate list (volby.cz).

and 2014). The elections in 2021, on the other hand, were marked by the creation of two coalitions (SPOLU and the Pirates and the STAN), when mainly within the latter coalition there was a significant preference for the STAN's candidates.

As can be seen from Table number 3, most MPs were elected in smaller constituencies thanks to preferential votes. Medium and large constituencies have not differed in the monitored phenomenon since 2017, which may be due to the increase in the number of parties in the Chamber of Deputies and the gradual loss of the position of the two largest parties, ODS and ČSSD. The increase in the number of parties meant that political parties began to win only a few mandates within the electoral district, which could cause an increase in the effectiveness of preferential voting, as mentioned by Kneblová (2010, 2014). In 2021, this was mainly due to the success of the STAN within the coalition in all constituencies.

Table 3: Number of MPs elected by preferential votes by constituency

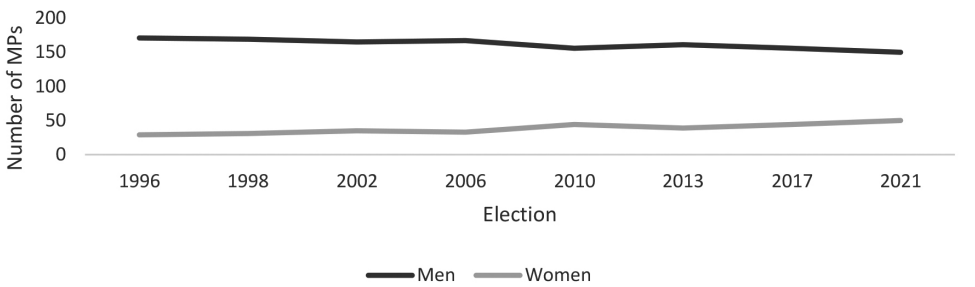
	2002	2006	2010	2013	2017	2021
Small constituency (13 seats)	1 (7.7%)	1 (7.7%)	7 (53.8%)	4 (30.8%)	3 (23.1%)	4 (30.8%)
Middle constituency (93 seats, 92 seats since 2017)	7 (7.5%)	1 (1.1%)	30 (19.4%)	18 (19.4%)	12 (13.0%)	16 (17.4%)
Large constituency (94 seats, 95 since 2017)	4 (4.3%)	3 (3.2%)	10 (7.4%)	7 (7.4%)	13 (13.7%)	16 (16.8%)
Total number of MPS	12 (6.0%)	5 (2.5%)	47 (23.5%)	29 (14.5%)	28 (14.0%)	36 (18%)

Source: Volby.cz, author's own calculations

Gender

From 1996 to the last election in 2021, the number of women increased from 29 to 50, corresponding to a quarter of the total MPs. However, it can be argued that the number of women does not correspond to representation in society.

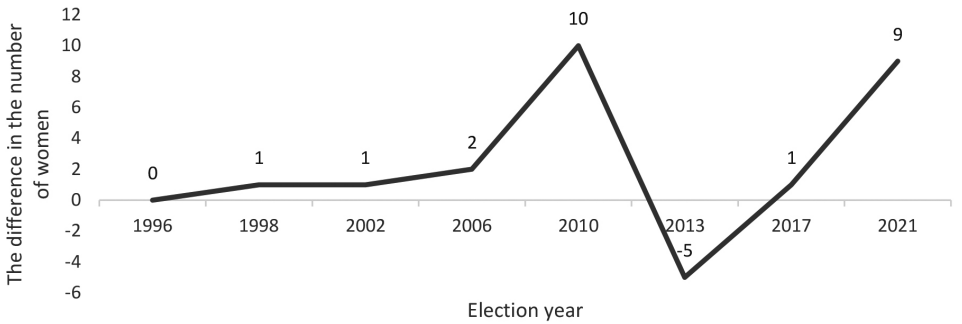
Graph 1: Composition of the Chamber of Deputies by gender from 1996–2020



Source: Volby.cz, author's own calculations

As can be seen from Graph 2, preferential votes positively affect the number of women represented in the Chamber of Deputies except for the year 2013. If voters did not have the opportunity to grant preferential votes, the number of women in 2010 or 2021 would be smaller by a quarter or a fifth, which would have a real impact on the functioning of the Chamber of Deputies. Women speak less than men, but to a greater extent they deal with social and healthcare topics in the Chamber of Deputies (Balík et al. 2019). Worth noting is the year 2010 and the result of the KSČM, when five women were elected thanks to preferential votes, the total number of preferentially elected party persons in these elections. Similarly, in 2021, ten women were elected out of 22 people elected through preferential votes for the STAN movement, which was in coalition with the Pirates at the time. A significant number of women were also elected in 2010 in ODS (4 out of 17) and Public Affairs (2 out of 4).

Graph 2: Impact of closed candidate lists – gender



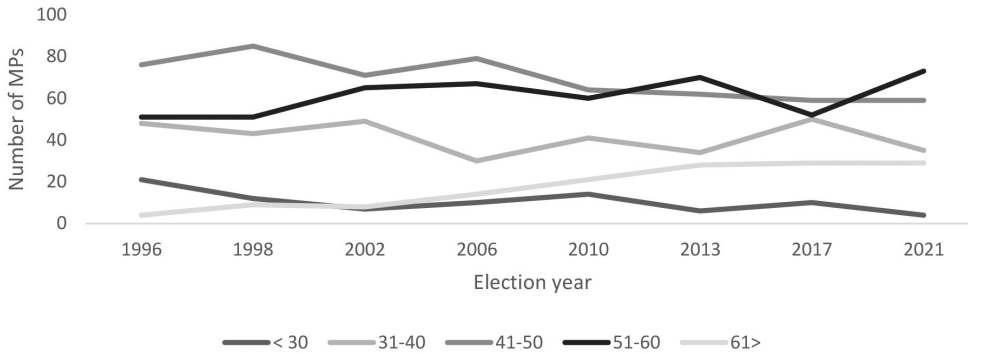
Source: Volby.cz, own calculations

Age

Graph 3 approximates the age composition of the Chamber of Deputies, while until 2013 there was a gradual aging of male and female deputies.[5] The number of people up to 30, from 31 to 40 and from 41 to 50 years old decreased at the expense of the other two categories. This trend was partly mitigated by the arrival of new political parties in 2010 and 2017, while it is interesting that the onset of the ANO movement in 2013 did not have a significant effect on the 'rejuvenation' of the Chamber of Deputies, as most of their deputies were over 51 years old. On the other hand, the MPs elected for the SPD, Pirates, STAN or KDU-ČSL parties (after returning to the Chamber of Deputies in 2013) mostly belonged to the categories of under 30, 31–40 or 41–50 years old.

5 Age average 1996 (43.8), 1998 (45.2), 2002 (46.9), 2006 (47.9), 2010 (47.2), 2013 (49.9), 2017 (47.4), 2021 (49.8).

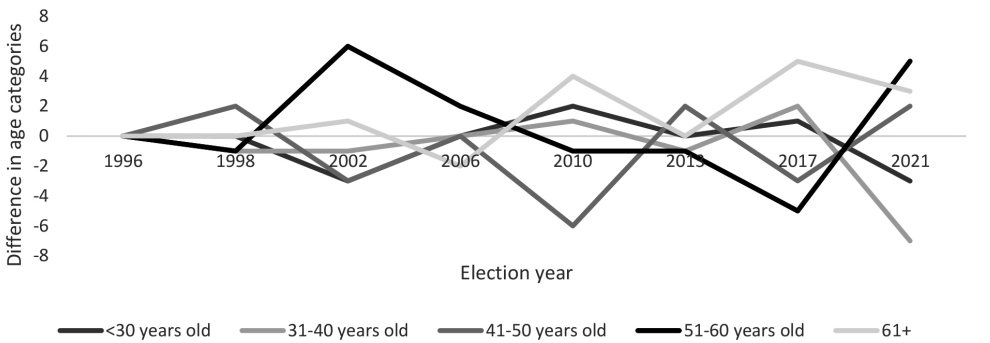
Graph 3: Composition of the Chamber of Deputies by age from 1996 to 2021



Source: Volby.cz, own calculations

The success of the KDU-ČSL, respectively STAN at the expense of the coalition partner, reduced the number of MPs in the 30, 31–40 year old (in 2002 also 41–50 year old) categories who would be elected in case of a closed candidate list in 2002, respectively 2021. Thanks to preferential votes, a higher number of MPs from the age category of 61 and over was elected in 2010 (mainly TOP 09) and 2017 (across parties) at the expense of the age category of 41–50 years old (in 2017, also 51–60 years old). As it turned out, only one MP at70 and one at 72 was elected by the preferential votes, which confirms the conclusions of Haase-Formánková et al. (2022) on the greater preference of candidates under 70 years of age.

Graph 4: Impact of closed candidate lists – age

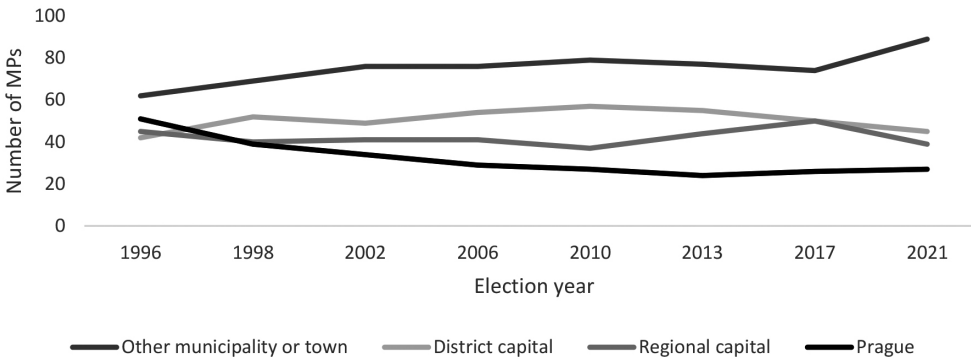


Source: Volby.cz, own calculations

Residence

The largest number of MPs residing in Prague was seen after the elections in 1996. In the following years, the number of MPs from Prague gradually decreased to one-eighth of the total number of deputies, which confirms the claims of the authors (Mikešová – Kostelecký 2016; Dvořák et al. 2021). As for deputies from regional towns, we see a constant value of one-fifth of all MPs and one-quarter for district towns up to 2017. Only the category of other municipalities has an increasing tendency, which reached 89 out of 200 MPs in the last electoral period.

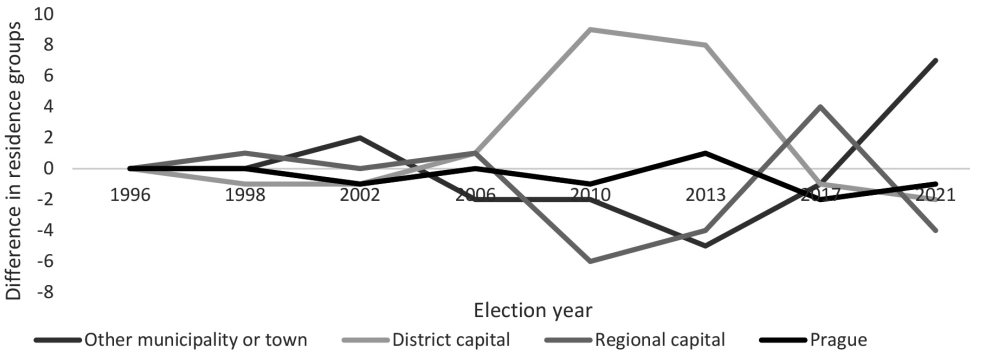
Graph 5: Composition of the Chamber of Deputies by place of residence from 1996 to 2021



Source: Volby.cz, own calculations

The real impact of preferential votes is most pronounced for district towns in 2010 and 2013, i.e. the period when, under the influence of various civic initiatives, there was an announced change in the existing political set (graph 6). The activity of civic initiatives could have resulted in more candidates from smaller district towns being elected thanks to preferential votes at the expense of candidates from regional towns or Prague, which are more typical for people at the top of the candidate lists (Put 2016). A similar trend could be observed in 2021 when the electoral success of STAN at the expense of the Pirates within the joint coalition enabled mayors of municipalities that cannot be classified as regional or district towns to enter the Chamber of Deputies.

Graph 6: Impact of closed candidate lists – residence

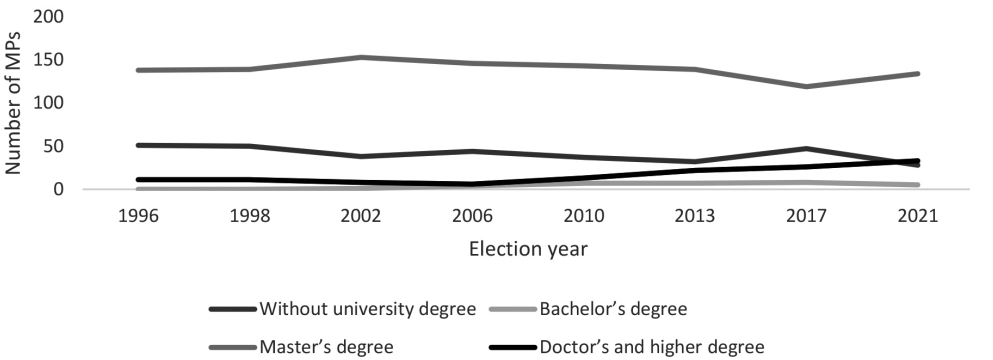


Source: Volby.cz, own calculations

Education

As regards education it's proven that most speeches and interpellations (except for doctoral and higher) are delivered by people with higher education (Balík et al. 2019). Graph 7 shows that most MPs in the Chamber of Deputies have a master's degree (over 3/5) or have no degree (more than 1/8 to 1/4). Since 2013, more than 1/10 of MPs with a doctorate or higher education have been part of the Chamber of Deputies.

Graph 7: Composition of the Chamber of Deputies by education from 1996 to 2021

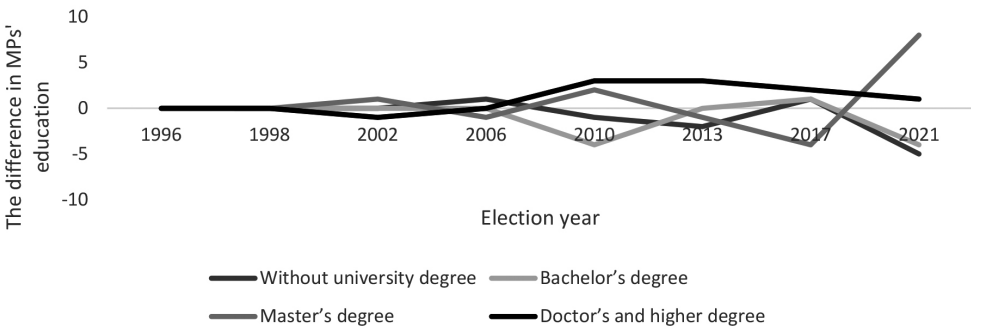


Source: Volby.cz, own calculations

Preferential votes influenced the composition of the Chamber of Deputies in several cases (Graph 8). In 2010, four fewer MPs with a bachelor's degree were elected, and four more MPs with a master's degree were elected in 2017 than

corresponded to the original nomination of the political parties. Preferential votes most significantly influenced the composition of the Chamber of Deputies in 2021, when five MPs without a degree and four MPs with a bachelor's degree were elected compared with the original nomination of the political parties. In their place, eight persons with a master's degree and one with a doctoral and higher degree were elected, which may impact the number of speeches and interpellations in the ongoing election period of the lower house of the Parliament. However, the increase in the number of people with a higher university degree could be because Pirate candidates, who often have not completed their studies, were overtaken by STAN candidates with completed studies.

Graph 8: Impact of closed candidate lists – education



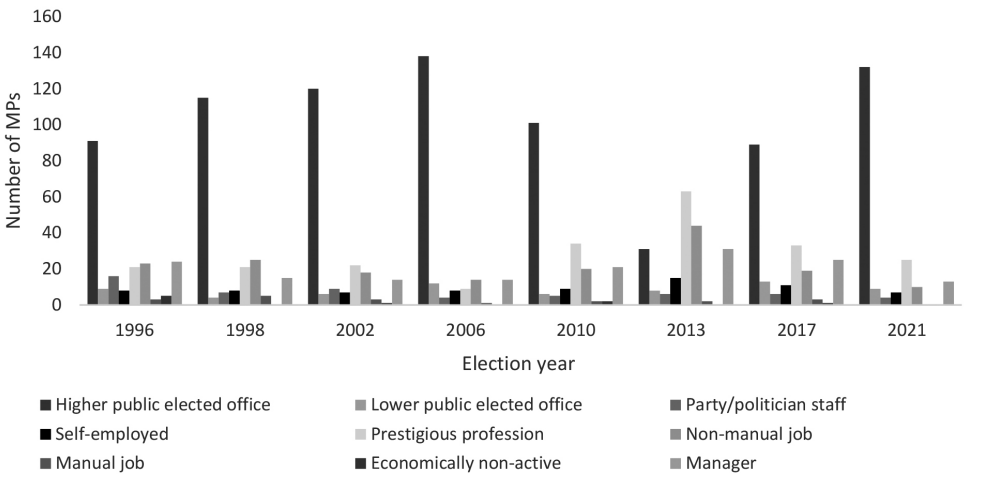
Source: Volby.cz, author's own calculations

Occupation

The occupations of elected MPs have been constant since 1996, and most MPs were associated with the professional career of a politician (Balík et al. 2019). The Chamber of Deputies was composed mainly of persons with a higher public elected office. The only exception was 2013, when candidates on the candidate list did not indicate to a greater extent their political experience (even though they had it), which may be connected to the previous activities (2010 and 2013) of civic initiatives calling for a change in political representation, as well as the entry of new political parties to the Chamber of Deputies. I can observe the opposite trend in the 2006 and 2021 elections when MPs often pointed to their experience in the Chamber of Deputies, the government or regional and municipal leadership. The second most represented category is prestigious professions, mainly teachers, doctors and lawyers. Here again it is important to focus on 2013, when candidates pointed to their prestigious professions to a greater extent than their political experience. The categories of non-manual work (office work) or managers (various leadership positions) were compa-

rable. One of the few categories that grew significantly in 2013/2017 was the entrepreneur category, which was caused by the significant success of the ANO movement in these elections. On the other hand, the categories of manual work, i.e. the unemployed (students and seniors), had a marginal representation.

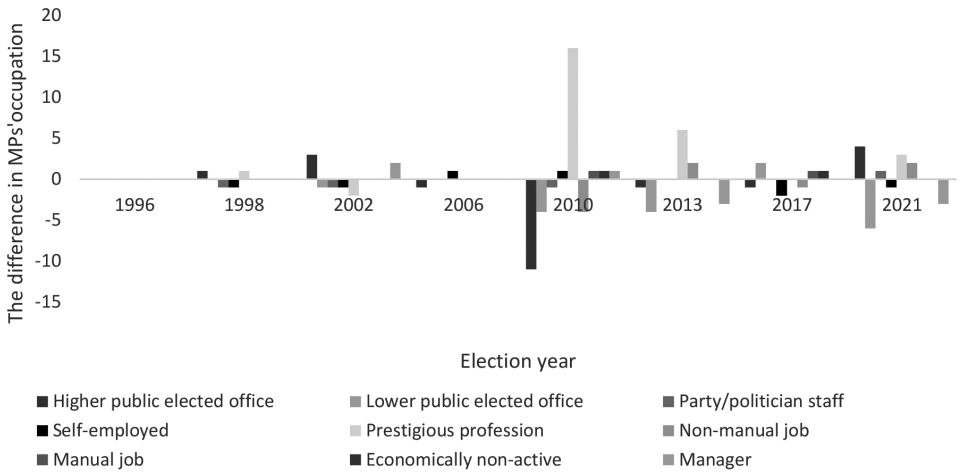
Graph 9: Composition of the Chamber of Deputies by occupation from 1996 to 2021



Source: Volby.cz, author's own calculations

From the results (Graph 10), the minimal impact of preferential votes on the composition of the Chamber of Deputies in most election years is evident. The only exception is 2010, when 11 fewer people with higher public positions were elected and, on the contrary, 16 more people with prestigious professions than would correspond to nominations by political parties. This decline of politicians with the highest public positions and their replacement by persons with prestigious professions could result from several civic initiatives calling for a change of the existing political set. A similar trend, when candidates with prestigious professions were elected instead of politicians thanks to preferential votes, can also be seen in 2013. Or in 2021, when candidates with a higher public function and prestigious profession were elected at the expense of six candidates with a lower public position and three managers. The increase in persons with a higher public position in 2021 thus occurred despite the non-election of most MPs of the Pirates, who were replaced by mayors from the STAN movement.

Graph 10: Impact of closed candidate lists – profession

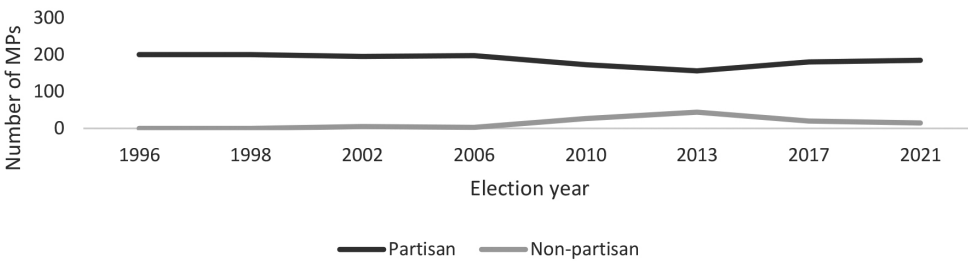


Source: Volby.cz, author's own calculations

Member of a political party

As can be seen from Graph 11, most elected MPs are party members. Most non-party members were elected in 2013 due to the entry of new political parties, ANO 2011 and Dawn – National Coalition, which used non-party members extensively on their candidate lists.

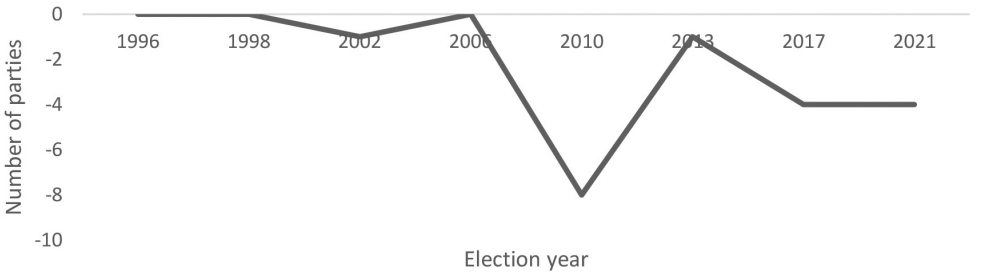
Graph 11: Party affiliation of elected MPs from 1996 to 2021



Source: Volby.cz, author's own calculations

Thanks to preferential votes, more non-party members were elected than would correspond to the composition of candidate lists by political parties. This fact became most evident in 2010, i.e. when civic initiatives called for a change in the existing political elites.

Graph 12: Impact of closed candidate lists – partisanship



Source: Volby.cz, own calculations

Political experience

In 2010 and 2021, thanks to preferential votes, significantly fewer incumbents in the earlier election period were elected. In 2010, this significant drop in incumbents may have been caused by initiatives calling for the replacement of existing politicians. Most incumbents listed MP as their occupation on the candidate list, which led to selecting candidates with a different occupation (see above). Voters thus preferred to give a preferential vote to another person on the candidate list, often with a prestigious profession. The reason was different in 2021. The incumbents of Pirates were replaced by the candidates of STAN thanks to preferential votes.

Table 4: Number of MPs defending the parliamentary mandate 1996–2021

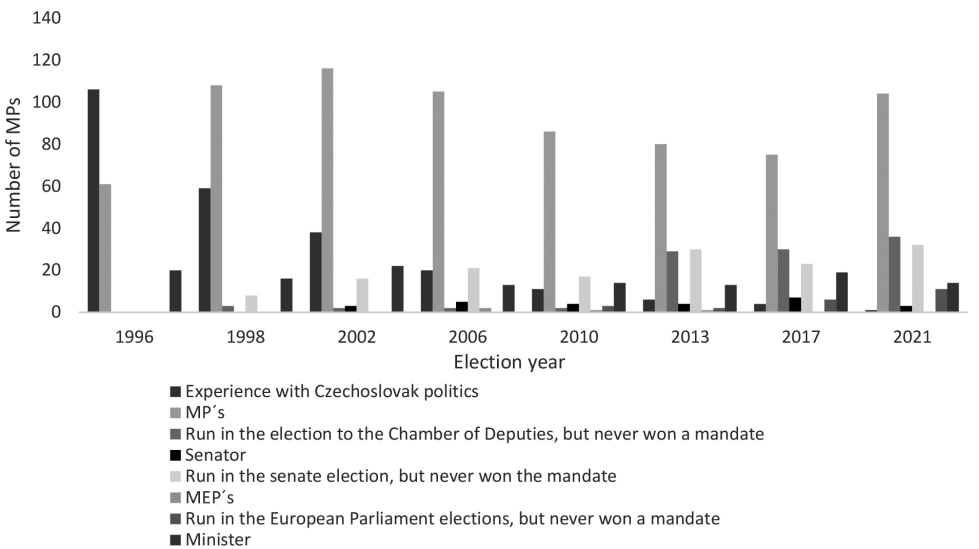
	1996	1998	2002	2006	2010	2013	2017	2021
Flexible candidate list	60	106	113	104	81	76	70	99
Closed candidate list	60	104	112	105	96	76	72	113
Difference	0	2	1	-1	-15	0	-2	-14

Source: Volby.cz; CHDPCZ, author's own calculations

Graph 13 shows the composition of the Chamber of Deputies through the political experience of its members. It is not surprising that, over time, the number of members of the Chamber of Deputies who had experience with the politics of the Czechoslovak Republic decreased. The success of new political parties and movements (2010) also affected the number of incumbents. The number of MPs who tried unsuccessfully to obtain a parliamentary mandate in past elections has also increased since 2013. In 2013, there were nine cases of KSČM nominees and eight cases of ANO 2011 candidates who ran for other political entities in

earlier elections. In 2017, 12 MPs of the ANO movement and eight MPs of the Pirates had failed in the previous parliamentary elections. In 2021, there were previously unsuccessful candidates for STAN (11 MPs), KDU-ČSL (8 MPs) and ANO 2011 (7 Mps). A minimum of MPs held a senator's mandate in the past; on the other hand, approximately a tenth of MPs had experience running for senator since 2002. So, these MPs wanted to continue their political career in the position of senator. Only a few MPs had experience with a mandate or candidacy for the European Parliament, even though 11 MPs with experience in an election campaign for the European Parliament succeeded in the last elections in 2021. More frequent political experience among MPs is their previous work in the government, which is unsurprising since many parties use ministers for the top positions on the candidate list, which is associated with a high chance of being elected (Dvořák – Pink 2022).

Graph 13: Political experience of MPs from 1996 to 2021

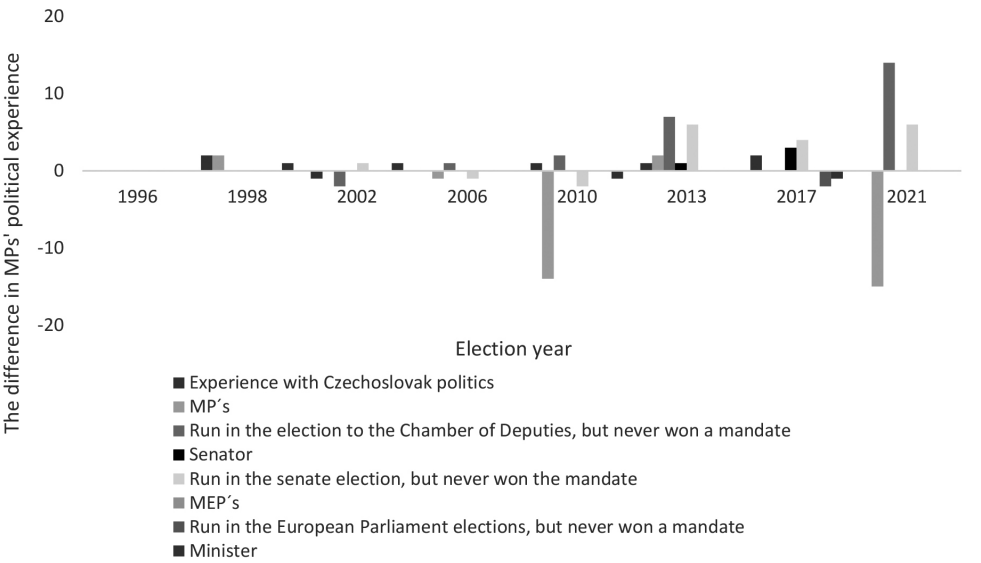


Source: Volby.cz; vláda.cz, author's own calculations

The influence of preferential votes is not so important for the political experience of MPs (graph 14). The number of MPs with parliamentary experience declined in 2010 and 2021. This is related to activities of civic initiatives calling for the replacement of existing politicians in 2010 and the success of STAN against the Pirates in 2021. Also, the persons who ran in the senate elections but did not win the mandate more often have become MPs by the preferential votes since 2013. It could mean that the campaign associated with the senate elections increases the candidate's familiarity among voters to such a level

that voters give him preferential votes more often, which helps him win the parliamentary mandate. Experience with a political campaign to the Chamber of Deputies was manifested in 2013 and 2021 for candidates who obtained a parliamentary mandate mainly by preferential votes. A possible explanation is greater awareness among voters or the candidate's effective use of experience from past elections.

Graph 14: Impact of closed candidate lists – political experience

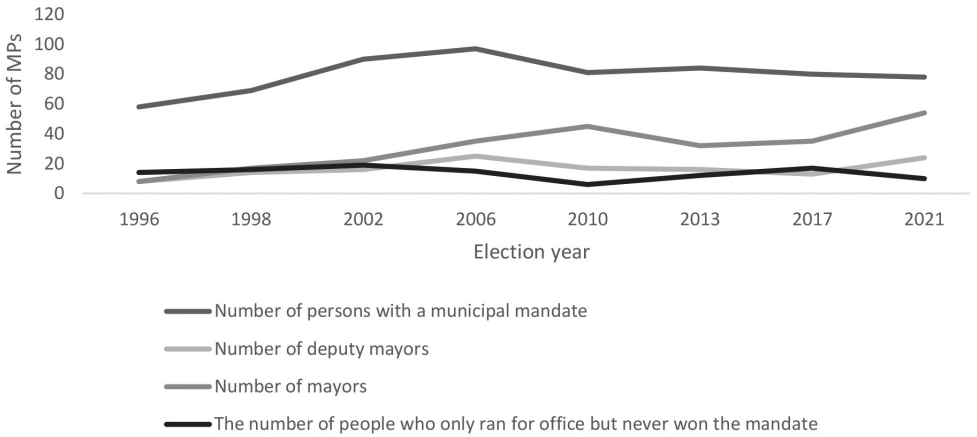


Source: Volby.cz; vláda.cz, author's own calculations

Municipal level

An increase in mayors among MPs is evident (Graph 15), mostly in 2021 when the STAN movement won many mandates at the expense of the Pirates. The fact that politicians choose a gradual path in their political paths (Bernard – Čermák, 2021; Hájek 2016, 2017; Ryšavý 2016) is also evidenced by the low number of deputies who have never succeeded at the municipal level. In the first election years, in almost half of the cases, these were active at the parliamentary level, and the communal level was no longer 'attractive' for them. On the contrary, in 2013 and 2017, unsuccessful MPs at the municipal level came from new political parties (ANO, SPD, Pirates). There may be several reasons why these future deputies were not elected at the municipal level. One of them can be the weak position of the party in the given municipality or the mere symbolic candidacy of a person at the bottom of the candidate list.

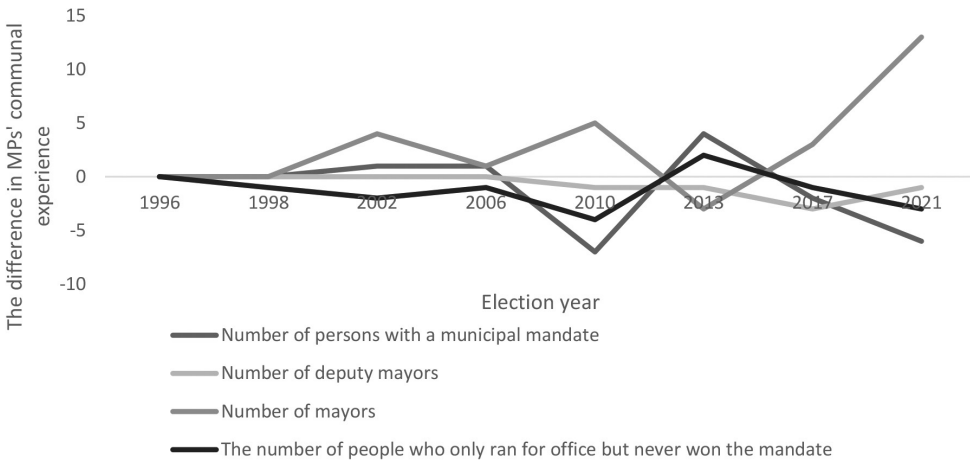
Graph 15: Experience of deputies from the municipal level from 1996 to 2021



Source: Volby.cz; author's own calculations

The influence of preferential votes was not pronounced until 2006, as seen in Graph 16. On the contrary, 2010 can be characterised as ground-breaking not only in terms of new political parties and the generational change of existing politicians but the effectiveness of preferential votes. Thanks to them, five more mayors and seven fewer municipal representatives were elected than would correspond to party nominations. Four candidates who were never successful at the municipal election were also elected in this election. A similar trend was also evident in 2017 and more significantly in 2021, when thanks to the success

Graph 16: Impact of closed candidate lists – experience from the municipal level



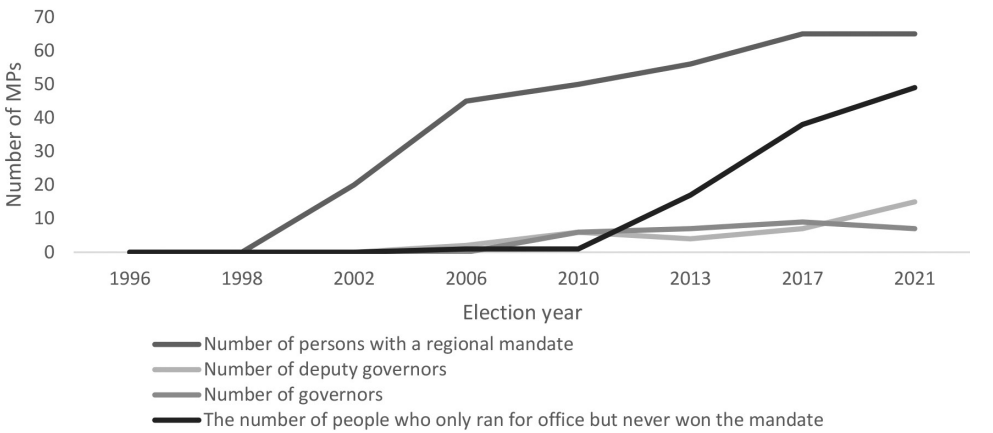
Source: Volby.cz; author's own calculations

of the STAN movement, 13 mayors who would not have made it to the Chamber of Deputies in the event of party nominations were elected using preferential votes. The six representatives failed due to preferential votes in 2006. It can therefore be concluded that the voters consider the position held by the candidate at the municipal level, and if he decides to give a preferential vote, the mayor has a good chance of getting it. That is, at least compared to the deputy mayor or representative.

Regional level

Just as at the municipal level, it is clear (graph 17) that the number of MPs who held the regional mandate before being elected to the Chamber of Deputies increased over time. Specifically, compared to 2002, the number of MPs with experience with a regional mandate almost triple in 2021. The number of governors and deputy governors is also increasing in a similar way, which confirms the conclusions about the permitted path of the political careers of politicians (Bernard – Čermák 2021; Hájek 2016, 2017; Ryšavý 2016). The number of MPs who have never succeeded in the regional elections has also increased since 2017. In 2017, there were 23 MPs from ANO, SPD and Pirates. In 2021, there were mainly MPs of the STAN.

Graph 17: Experience of deputies from the regional level from 1996 to 2021

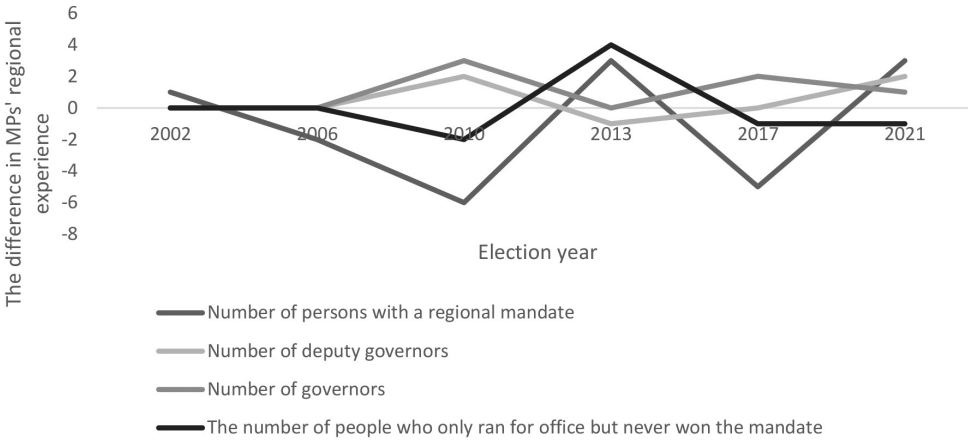


Source: Volby.cz; author's own calculations

The influence of preferential votes was insignificant within the examined period, as shown in Graph 18. The differences between the types of regional functions changed minimally; often, due to preferential votes, it was a slight (4 MPs) increase or decrease in the number of regional representatives or persons who

never succeeded in the regional elections. The influence of preferential votes on the three governors elected in 2010, two in 2017 and one in 2021, who otherwise would not have reached the Chamber of Deputies, appears to be important. Again, their success can be linked to greater familiarity among voters.

Graph 18: Impact of closed candidate lists – experience from the regional level



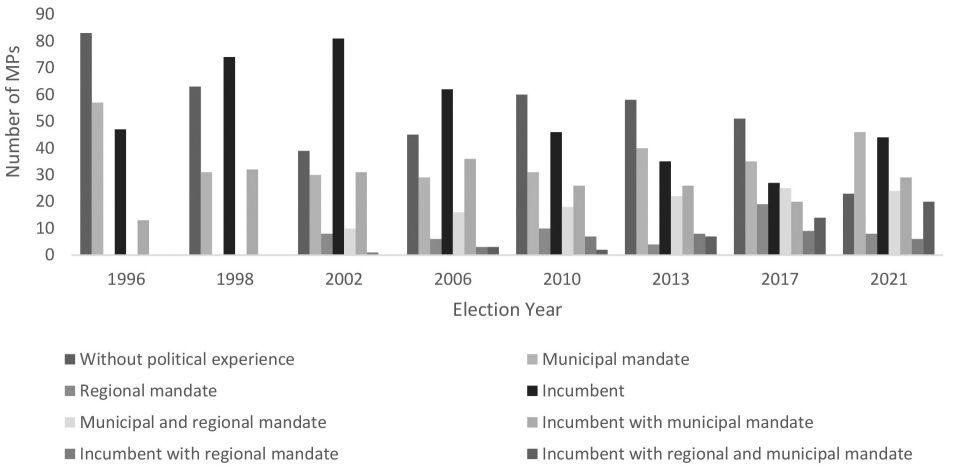
Source: Volby.cz; author's own calculations

The multiple-office holding

Around a quarter of all elected MPs did not hold any other political (elected) office at the time of their election. The only exception is 2021, when the number of MPs with no other mandate was 10%. Future MPs were most likely to hold only a local mandate, or they cumulated it with a parliamentary mandate. A tenth of MPs also combined a municipal and a regional mandate. To a limited extent, the MPs cumulated the regional and deputy mandate. Conversely, since 2017 there has been an increase in MPs across political parties holding all three municipal, regional and parliamentary seats. The same year, ANO and SPD MPs frequently held a regional mandate before their election. The data confirms that MPs are choosing a gradual path in their political paths (Bernard – Čermák 2021; Hájek 2016, 2017; Ryšavý 2016)), but at the same time they accumulate these mandates further.

The influence of the preferential vote was most pronounced in the 2010 elections when more candidates who did not hold any mandate were elected. It was probably due to civic initiatives calling for a change of politicians, as evidenced by the fact that if closed candidate lists had been in place, 14 more incumbents would have been elected. Similarly, seven MPs with a municipal mandate were

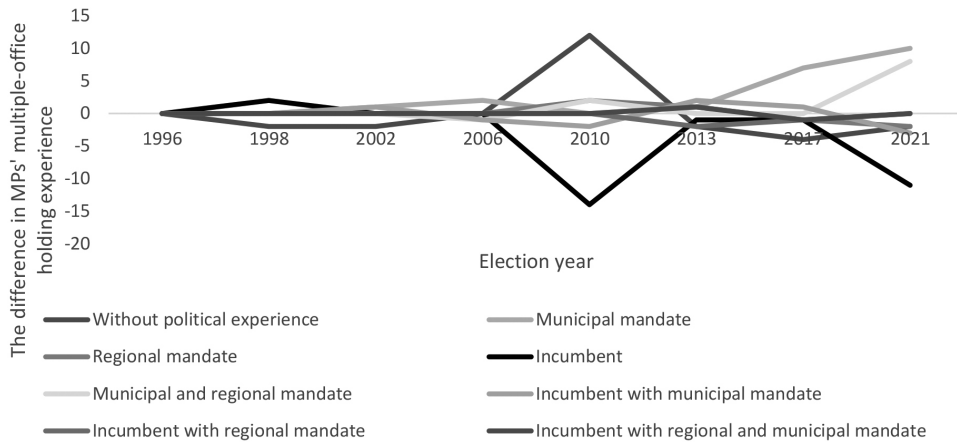
Graph 19: The multiple-office holding of deputies from the regional level from 1996 to 2021



Source: Volby.cz; author's own calculations

elected in 2017 due to preferential votes. In 2021, preferential votes influenced the composition of the Chamber of Deputies when candidates from the STAN, with the municipal mandate, were successful at the expense of the incumbents of Pirates. Candidates of STAN, KDU-ČSL and other parties who held municipal and regional mandates were equally successful. Thus, preference votes can play a role in the preference of persons having a particular political office.

Graph 20: Impact of closed candidate lists – the multiple-office holding



Source: Volby.cz; author's own calculations

VI. Conclusion

The preferential votes are more likely to be obtained by persons placed at the top of the candidate list with specific personal characteristics, i.e. gender, education, place of residence, occupation and age (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022, Balík – Hruška 2022; Voda 2010, 2014). The elections in 2010, 2013 and 2021 proved key in influencing the composition of the Chamber of Deputies. Moreover, the electoral change associated with preferential votes in 2010 and 2021 increased the effectiveness of preferential votes. As it has been proven, the influence of several citizen initiatives calling for the change of the existing political set, the emergence of new political parties in 2010 and 2013 or the apparent dominance of one of the coalition partners can also be a trigger for the substantial use of preferential votes. In the first case, it may be an expression of dissatisfaction with the political situation in the country, and in the second case, dissatisfaction with one of the coalition partners. The effects of preferential votes on the composition of the Chamber of Deputies can be significant whether it is a larger number of elected women, a smaller number of deputies under the age of 40 (significantly in 2021 after the fiasco of the Pirates) or the preference for local elites (mayors, governors). The composition of the Chamber of Deputies by profession was significantly affected in 2010 when several defending MPs did not defend their mandate, and MPs with prestigious professions (doctor, lawyer, etc.) were elected instead. Alternatively, in 2021, several mayors succeeded at the expense of municipal representatives, managers and MPs advocating for the Pirates. Preferential votes also significantly impacted the failure of incumbents; this effect was particularly evident in 2010 and 2021. The influence of preferential votes was also clearly visible in the larger number of non-party MPs elected. Also, the MPs with experience with elections to the Senate has increased since 2013. The decline of MPs with parliamentary experience was related to the activities of citizen initiatives calling for the change of politicians in 2010 and with the success of STAN against the Pirates in 2021. The number of MPs who listed the position of mayor as their occupation and at the same time succeeded thanks to preferential votes since 2010 also raised. Experience from the regional level was not so important, but even so, those candidates who were deputy governors or governors were more often elected thanks to preferential votes. Regarding the multiple-office holding, it is clear that MPs hold a mandate at the local level at the same time, and since 2017 they have been accumulating their mandate at the local and regional level. A mandate at the municipal or regional level played a significant role in 2013 and 2021, when candidates with a cumulative mandate, either a parliamentary and municipal mandate or a municipal and regional mandate, were preferred over incumbents.

In summary, the preferential votes positively affected the number of women in the Chamber of Deputies. Also, persons from smaller municipalities or

district towns can, in the event of a favourable situation (2010, 2013, 2021), address several voters who will give them their vote and thus skip candidates from regional towns or Prague, which the party nominated for the front of the list of candidates. This is also related to the fact that they are often the mayors of the mentioned municipalities. It is not so surprising that in the case of efforts to change the political set, mainly in 2010, there was a drop in defending politicians at the expense of mayors or persons with prestigious professions, thanks to preferential votes.

Similarly, in 2021, thanks to preferential votes, several mayors were elected at the expense of existing politicians running for the Pirates. It was also confirmed that closed candidate lists would reduce the number of MPs who are over 61 years old. On the other hand, more MPs over 51 were elected at the expense of younger age groups due to preferential votes. Results also confirmed our assumption that preferential votes would not significantly influence the composition of the Chamber of Deputies regarding education. The only exception is 2021 when more master's degree holders were elected at the expense of bachelor's degree holders and people without a degree, which is often related to the fact that several MPs for the Pirates have not yet completed their studies.

Overall, I can say that in situations that record the use of preferential votes (destabilisation of the party system and the influence of citizens' initiatives, multi-party coalitions), preferential votes can play a significant role in the composition of the Chamber of Deputies. As was said above, for a better understanding of who receives preferential votes, it would be necessary to focus on other election years not associated with the specific situation of 2010, 2013 or 2021. Similarly, one could focus in more detail on the individual parties and the profile of the candidates who won the mandate thanks to the will of the voters. Another possibility is to focus on the specific position of some MPs who defend the mandate and of their own free will use preferential voting as a referendum on their activities, as Marek Benda did, for example, in 2010, 2013 and 2017.

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