

## FAMILIES AND DIVORCE DURING PANDEMICS: LITERATURE REVIEW AND RECENT EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM CZECHIA AND SLOVAKIA

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**Abstract:** It is evident that after the start of the pandemics certain changes occurred, not excluding demographic processes, among them divorce rate. This study has the character of an overview of existing research. The overview does not relate only to the newest studies from 2020 or 2021, but to some older studies, too. A component of the study is a simple analysis of current trends in divorce, primarily changes in seasonality in the case of Czechia and Slovakia. The impact of the pandemics on the divorce rate in the course of the year is notable. According to observations of available data, the changes in seasonal trends of divorces have been caused especially by fluctuations in the processing of divorce agenda. However, it is possible that other factors can effect the “jumps” in divorces.

**Keywords:** epidemics, pandemic/pandemics, family relations, partnership relations, divorce

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The relation between infections and human populations has a long history. According to contemporary studies on the occurrence of infections such as tuberculosis, for example, this relationship even preceded the migration of humanity out of Africa. Archaeological finds as well as written documents clearly show that diseases had a significant impact not only on the demographic or economic aspects of life, but on human behaviour, too Page et al. (1956), Hays (2005), Norrie (2016), McMullen (2017). For example, according to the writings of Greek historian and politician Thucydides from the times of the ancient epidemics in years 430-427 BCE, serious violations of rights and social standards occurred in Athens at that time. This was considered by many scholars of that time as a collapse of Athenian morality Hays (2005). Thucydides offers the following witness about the period of decline of society: “Men now coolly ventured on what they had formerly done in a corner, and not just as they pleased, seeing the rapid transitions produced by persons in prosperity

suddenly dying and those who before had nothing succeeding to their property. It was settled that present enjoyment, and all that contributed to it, was both honourable and useful. Fear of gods or law of man there was none to restrain them.” Page et al. (1956, p. 353).

Likewise, in the current situation certain economic, social and demographic changes are taking place. The sharp increase in the number of divorce applications has also been the subject of several reports in the world media (Global Times, 2020; Prasso, 2020; Daily Sabah, 2020; Liu, 2020; McDonald, 2020). The period after the start of pandemic has also been the subject of many cross-sectional studies, psychological and behavioral analyses focused on changes in interpersonal relationships: collegial, partner and family (Van Bavel et al., 2020; Pietromonaco and Overall, 2021; Yang and Ma, 2020; Grover et al., 2020; Balzarini et al., 2021; Divorce Negotiator, 2020; Levkovich and Shinan-Altman, 2020). For this reason, we herein summarize the works that focus on the impact of current situation on intimate and family relationships. Furthermore, we would like to response (try to response) the research questions: *Is the situation associated with the current pandemic causing a deterioration of intimate relationships? Is the impact of the pandemics on intimate relationships so significant that a significant increase in divorce rates is occurring or vice versa? Has there been a change in the divorce trend in Slovakia in Czechia after the start of the pandemic?*

## 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As early as the start of 2020, several media outlets began to report that a sudden increase in the number of divorce applications was occurring in many countries around the world in connection with the current pandemics. According to a report on the pages of Divorce Negotiator (2020), the first information on the increase in the number of divorce applications comes from Wuhan City in the Hubei Province. Subsequently, news from other Chinese cities began to appear in the media. These news from other Chinese cities brought Bloomberg, the Global Times or BBC. From other countries like Italy, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Turkey or Australia, the CBC, The New Arab, The Herald Sun or the Turkish Daily Sabah for example, reported an increase in the number of divorce applications in the first half of 2020. On the other hand, it appears that some countries avoided a sudden increase in divorce rates after the start of the pandemics. Japan is clearly an example. In an article from 30 August 2020, the Japanese periodical Sora News24 reported that, according to divorce statistics published by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs, there was a 10 per cent reduction in divorce rates compared to the same period last year.

In the case of the academic literature, there are a wide range of older and new studies where the authors examine the impact of a pandemics on human behaviour or relationships. Within of the literature review, we focused on the most actual. A cross-sectional study conducted by Yang and Ma (2020) found that the onset of the epidemics in China led to a reduction in emotional well-being by up to 74%. The

study reports that people living close to the epidemiological outbreak, older people and those living in marriage recorded a sharper decline in emotional well-being. In the case of people living in a marriage, the authors state that a persistent pandemic and, for example, a longer stay at home in a confined space during a lockdown period can potentially exacerbate persistent relationship problems. Another similar cross-sectional study by Li et al. (2020) focuses on the effects of the current pandemic on partnership and sexual relations among young Chinese people. The study involved 967 respondents aged 16 to 35 years old out of a total of 3 500 responses. According to this study, although the onset of pandemics and subsequent measures led to a reduction in risky sexual behaviour among young Chinese, 22% of respondents also showed a reduction in sexual desire. In 41% of respondents, there was a reduction in the frequency of sexual activity and in the case of respondents in a permanent relationship, nearly one-third saw a deterioration. Respondents' interest in pornography also showed an increase.

In another article assessing the effects of the current pandemics on the sexual behaviour of the population, Ibarra et al. (2020) include an analysis of the questionnaire survey by García-Cruz and Peraza (2020). The survey focuses on the theme of sexual behaviour of the population during the current pandemics. According to this survey, the situation caused by the pandemics did not more markedly affect the sexual frequency of respondents: only 14% of English-speaking persons and 7% of Spanish speakers confirmed higher sexual activity in the survey. The survey also notes that people began to use various “online dating” applications more intensively in the first months of the pandemic, and statistics from the Pornhub webpage showed that interest in pornography increased significantly at the beginning of 2020, with the peak recorded on 25 May 2020, when the viewership on this porn site increased by 24% immediately after the site operator offered people a free premium version of the site. The operator's aim was to motivate people to stay in social isolation after the start of the pandemics. At the conclusion of the article, the authors state that according to current surveys, a pandemic is not only changing sexual relations, but also partnership relations. Quarantine or isolation, problems with sexual life, job losses, economic problems and an uncertain future can trigger the breakdown of many relationships. In addition, forced isolation in the case of persistent relationship problems can accelerate the process of relationship breakdown.

Arafat et al. (2020) also did not note any significant change in sexual behaviour before and during quarantine in a survey that mapped the change in the frequency of sexual activity after the onset of the pandemics. Their survey orientated on a population in Southeast Asia, with people in three countries – Bangladesh, India and Nepal – taking part. In total, 120 people, mostly men with knowledge of English, participated in the survey. From the survey, it follows that approximately 77% of respondents had sexual intercourse 1 to 5 times a week before lockdown began. After the start of the lockdown, however, only about 72.5% declared the above-mentioned frequency of sexual activity. This indicates that not even the onset of the pandemics had a significant effect on the sexual behaviour of partners. Overall, according to the survey, up to 50% of respondents felt an improvement in emotional bonds during the

lockdown, which the authors attribute to the increase in time people could spend with their families during the lockdown. The article gives as a second reason that people feel better in a relationship if they believe they have more sexual activity than their normal sexual frequency. On the other hand, Muise et al. (2016) state in their article that no relationship exists between sexual activity and the feeling of well-being and life satisfaction. Zhang and Zheng (2020) also recorded an improvement in mental health and relationships during the lockdown. Grover et al. (2020) in their cross-sectional study were a third to observe an improvement in work, neighbourly, family and partnership relationships after the start of the pandemics. They stated there that during the lockdown in early 2020, half of 1,685 adult Indian respondents experienced an improvement in intimate relationships. Approximately 44% of those asked said that their relationship with their children had improved, and more than 47% also stated that their relationship with their parents had improved. The authors attribute these improvements in interpersonal relationships to several factors. First, they suggest that the improvement can possibly be attributed to reduced stress from work. Second, the article mentions people having more time for the family; it then presents people's fear of death as the third reason for better personal relationships, because, according to the authors, this was a reason for reducing interpersonal "struggles". On the other hand, roughly one-third of respondents stated that after the start of the pandemics, their level of negative emotions, such as fear or anger, increased. One-third of respondents likewise expressed feelings of anger at themselves as well as at others as a result of frequently changing anti-epidemiological measures. On the one hand, the improvement of family relationships and, on the other hand, the increase in negative emotions creates a discrepancy in the work. With regard to other works, such as Tesser and Beach (1998) or Niff and Karney (2009), we think that a general rise in negative emotions is largely reflected in family relationships, and therefore we consider the results of the survey to be questionable.

The study of El-Zoghby et al. (2020), which involved 510 adult Egyptians, examines the effects of the current pandemics on mental health and social assistance. In addition to the effects of the pandemics on overall mental health, the authors briefly mention in the analysis the effects on family life. According to the survey, tension in the home environment increased in nearly 63% of respondents. The authors in the article also confirm the statistical significance of the relationship between higher work and domestic tension and marriage. On the other hand, up to 40% of those surveyed stated that they felt increased support from family members after the start of the pandemics. Nearly 65% of respondents began to take more interest in the feelings of family members.

Israeli authors Levkovich and Shinan-Altman (2020), also points out that the onset of a pandemics was a difficult period for many families and intimate partnerships. The study involved 1,407 Hebrew-speaking adults and was conducted using statistical methods and in-depth interviews. Through the in-depth interviews, participants reported that the arrival of the current pandemics was generally a great shock and change for them. They felt the changes not only at work but also in family life.

Significant changes mainly touched on families with children, where the daily routine was disrupted due to the closure of nursery, elementary and secondary schools. The obligations of learning and caring for children were thus fully transferred to the family. This has become, according to a survey by the American Psychological Association (2020), one of the most significant stressors in families with children since the onset of the pandemics. Specifically, it is these changes in family coexistence that can have a negative effect on family relationships and can lead to more frequent conflicts among family members. A situation when one partner cannot go to work and remains passive during household work could also have had a negative effect on family and intimate relationships after the pandemics began, and situations when partners are not used to spending too much time together can also have a negative impact on intimate relationships.

The work of Balzarini et al. (2021) is one of the most comprehensive studies focusing on changes in partnership relationships after the onset of the pandemics. Their study involved 3,593 adults from 57 countries. According to the analysis, the present situation associated with the current pandemics and the introduction of various measures against the spread of the pandemics may be a relatively significant source of stress and a reduction in the quality of partnerships. Events such as the loss of employment due to the deteriorating economic situation caused by various anti-pandemic measures as well as general uncertainty and isolation can significantly reduce the quality of a partnership life. From the results of the study, however, it follows that even if the situation caused by the pandemics is felt as a significant source of stress, this situation may not have a negative impact on the atmosphere in the partnership. The authors saw that if respondents considered their partner as more perceptive towards their needs and emotions, they were less likely to transmit the changes associated with pandemics to the partnership than those who did not see their partner as receptive. Further, the authors highlighted in the work the important role of open communication in partnership. Although quarrels may occur in crisis moments, overcoming problems is much easier in this case.

Pietromonaco and Overall (2021) also examined the impact and consequences of the current pandemics on partnerships in their work, in which authors focused on what kind of external stress factors and existing relationship problems shape the functioning of a relationship. According to the authors, this information should help shape the consequences of the current pandemics on the stability of relationships and thus determine which relationships appear to be the most vulnerable. They state that there are several input factors that affect the processes of adaptation in dyadic relationships. These processes represent the reactions of the partners in pairs to certain situations that in turn affect the quality and stability of the relationship. The authors can describe the individual input factors in a scheme by Kerney and Bradbury (1995 in Pietromonaco and Overall, 2021), according to which, intimate relationships are affected by three groups of factors:

- *The existing vulnerability of the relationship* – we here include factors such as: social class, marginalized group (ethnic, racial, sexual), life stage, age.

- *External stress factors* – we here also include factors related to the pandemics, such as: economic factors, loss of employment, lack of childcare (day care, school), quarantine, isolation, sick family member, death of a relative.
- *Enduring vulnerability of individuals in pairs* – we here assign factors such as: measure of uncertainty, emotional health, individual temperament, history of traumatic experiences/unfavourable fate.

The intensity and duration with which all these factors operate then has a direct impact on interactions in a relationship, such as mutual support, kindness, negativity and willingness to compromise, and these also have a direct impact on the quality and stability of the relationship. Couples which were significantly affected by one of the above factors even before the outbreak of the pandemics are considered to be more endangered by the situation. Couples with children are also more endangered, because among their other obligations they have to manage the care of children and thus overcome more stress factors. If, however, the couple finds the right way to communicate, the partners are sensitive to one another's problems and are better able to cooperate, external stress factors then appear to be less significant.

In the work of Van Bavel et al. (2020), the authors express themselves through the form of a discussion on society's reactions to the current pandemics. In one of the sections, the authors also briefly discuss the impact of a pandemics on intimate relationships, stating in the discussion that the social effects of the pandemics are to some extent transmitted to our homes. The sudden proximity of family members caused by anti-pandemic measures can cause feelings of confusion and anger. In combination with the length of isolation, these emotions can have a negative impact on family relations, which can then lead to domestic violence. Even when there is no forced proximity to family members, there is in general stress, not to mention economic stress, connected with relationship problems. It thus remains unclear why and for whom the changes associated with the pandemics will be harmful or beneficial. What is certain, however, is that the pandemics will change the trajectory of our relationships to a certain extent. One of the primary factors needed to maintain a happy relationship even today is the right setting of expectations according to life circumstances. It is not possible during the pandemic to expect that we will handle all challenges without any problems; therefore, it is necessary to set expectations for intimate relationships as well, and the expectation rate should remain as high as possible.

In Czechia, Bartoš et al. (2020) made an analysis of the effects of current pandemic on mental health. According to the authors, in addition to the effects on physical health and the economic situation, the pandemics is also having a major impact on mental health. In the first wave of the pandemics, 20% of respondents suffered from impaired mental health. This is more than triple the number from before the pandemic. Women, particularly those with children, were most affected in terms of mental health deterioration. The authors ascribe this primarily to the unequal distribution of household responsibilities. Further, the pandemics significantly affected the mental health of young people in the category of 18 to 24-year-olds. The exact reasons for this deterioration of mental health are not entirely clear. It is assumed,

however, that young people are much more exposed to some external stressors, such as job loss and the associated sudden lifestyle changes, than are older generations. The third group most affected was people from households whose income rapidly declined during the pandemics.

An analysis by Prokop et al. (2020) is processed in a similar way. This analysis, however, is devoted more on the longitudinal development of changes in the behaviour of the inhabitants of Czechia in regard to social contacts, consumption and emotions felt. One of the most important factors of changes in the behaviour of the population was manifested at work, in the form of working from home. People working from home were limited not only in their social contacts to a greater extent, but also to consumption and use of mass transit. Another important factor for changing people's behaviour appears to be the measure of fear and anxiety about the pandemics, which was felt by people during the survey.

In Slovakia, Hlinčíková et al. (2020) conducted the studies on the effects of the pandemic on society. The study shows that respondents experienced a wide range of emotions, such as fear, panic, helplessness, fear of future development, fear for loved ones and concerns over the development of the atmosphere in the household or the economic situation. The respondents also felt some changes in their daily routine after the pandemics began. These changes concerned not only work but also family life. About 30% of respondents said that the most common change in the field of work after the start of a pandemics and the subsequent lockdown was the switch to working from home. They also noted that social contacts were limited to a minimum. At the same time, women felt greater changes in their daily routine than men, as many women usually had duties exclusively on their own shoulders during the lockdown. Aside from working their own jobs from home, women also cared for children and the household. Nevertheless, 59% of the respondents said that after the start of the pandemics and the measures that followed, they considered the atmosphere in their household to be positive and constructive. According to the survey, changes associated with the situation around the pandemics were perceived less negatively by multigenerational families, where there seems to be a more even distribution of responsibilities among household members than in the case of nuclear families. At the same time, the study shows that older members of multigenerational households did not feel the effects of social isolation to the same extent as seniors living separated from their immediate family, who often had no one to help with common tasks during the first weeks of the pandemics.

Even though the above-mentioned authors did not primarily analyse the effects of the pandemics on intimate and partner relationships, it can be noticed that some shifts also occurred in this area.

### **3 MATERIAL AND METHODS**

We used data from statistical offices and ministries of justice of both countries to analyse seasonal divorce trends. We drew information from statistical offices on

the total number of divorces (absolute values) in individual months of the year at the national territorial level for the years 2017 (2018)-2020. The seasonal divorce index can be calculated from either absolute or relative values. In this analysis, we calculated the indicator from the relative values of the monthly divorce index. We calculated the indicator analogously as the monthly wedding index, which is calculated in the publications written for example, by Pavlík et al. (1986), Vereš (1987).

$$\text{Month divorce index} = \frac{D_i}{Cc_i}$$

$D_i$  – divorce rate in i month,  $Cc_i$  – Correction coefficient in i month.

Correction coefficient takes values shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Values of Correction coefficient

Month	Value
January	1,0185
February	0,9199 / 0,9528 (Leap year)
March	1,0185
April	0,9856
May	1,0185
June	0,9856
July	1,0185
August	1,0185
September	0,9856
October	1,0185
November	0,9856
December	1,0185

Source: (Vereš, 1987)

Month divorce index is used to compensate for the uneven number of days in the months of the year. Subsequently, we calculated the seasonal divorce index. The index is calculated as:

$$\text{Seasonal divorce index} = \frac{Mdi_i}{\overline{Mdi}}$$

$Mdi_i$  – Month divorce index in month i,  $\overline{Mdi}$  – average Month divorce index. In the graphs, we compare the seasonal divorce index for the average of 2017-2019 with 2020.



In the analysis at the regional level, we drew from the statistical offices the already calculated relative indicator, the crude divorce rate, in quarterly time intervals for the years 2017 to 2020. The gross rate indicator is calculated as:

$$\text{Crude divorce rate} = \frac{D}{MYD} * 1000$$

$D$  – count of divorces,  $MYD$  – mid-year population, represents the population in the middle of the calendar year, usually calculated as an average of the initial and final state of the population.

The crude divorce rate thus expresses the incidence of divorce per 1,000 middle-year population in year (quarter). From the crude divorce rate, we calculated the index of change, which is given as a percentage. Indicators can capture changes over time. We calculated it as:

$$\text{Index of change} = \frac{CDR_{n+1}}{CDR_n} * 100 - 100$$

$CDR_{n+1}$  – is the crude divorce rate in next (compared) year,

$CDR_n$  – is the crude divorce rate of the previous year, which is the basis for comparison. This is a basic year, which represents 100 %.

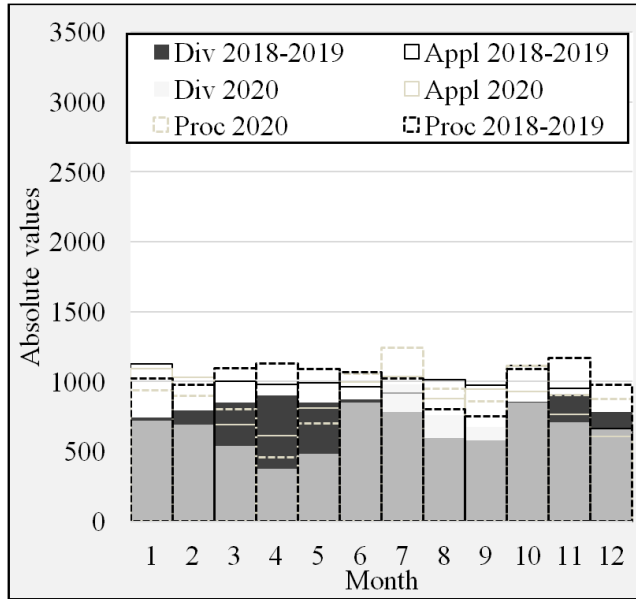
The rest of the formula represents the calculation of the change in percentage.

In the graphs, we compare the crude divorce rate for the average of 2017-2019 and 2020.

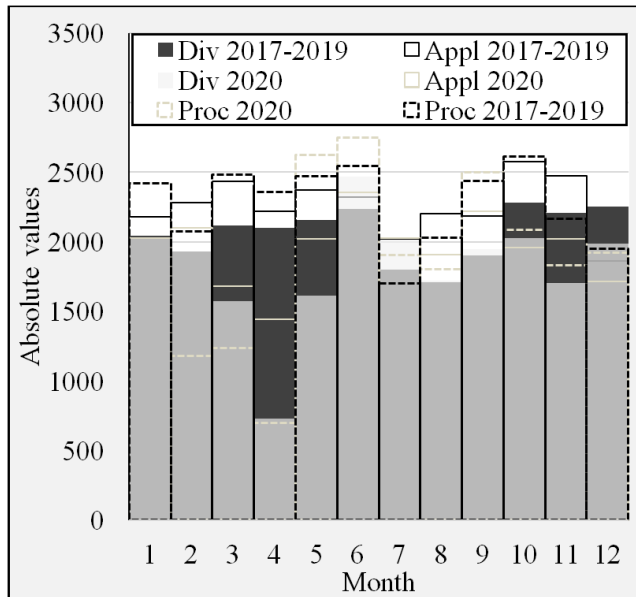
We drew information from the Ministries of Justice on the number of divorce applications and the productivity of the courts. Data for Slovakia were available in monthly time series only from 2018. For Czechia, data were also available for a longer period, we did not use these data due to a lack of Slovak data. In the graphs, we examine the average of 2018-2019 and 2020.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first two figures show selected absolute data for the average of 2017 or 2018 to 2019 and data for 2020. In the long term, the period from March to May is characterised by one of the highest divorce rates during the year in both countries. In 2020, however, we record the lowest divorce rates in the year in both countries in this period. In addition, during this period, we also encounter a reduced number of divorce applications in both countries. According to the Figures 1 and 2, the processing of the divorce agenda was weaker in both countries too. Subsequently, in the early summer of 2020, there was a kind of “recuperation” in both countries and the number of divorces and divorce applications increased. The number of divorce and applications in some summer months of 2020 even exceeded the average values for the previous two or three years.



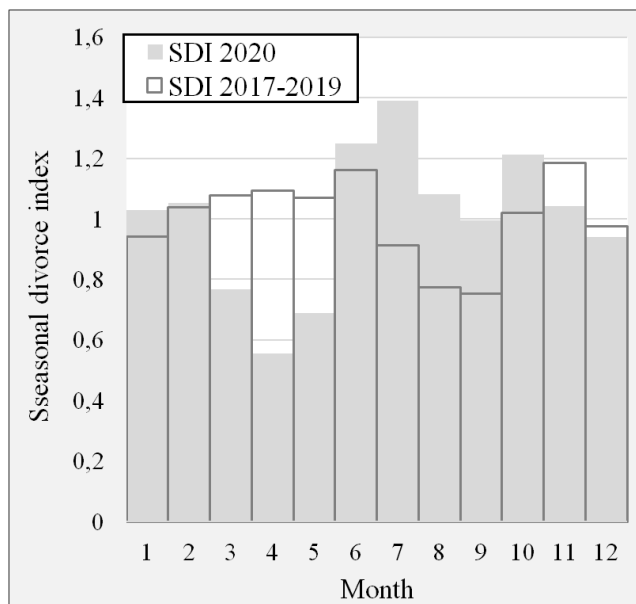
**Figure 1** Seasonal trends of selected indicators in Slovakia in years 2018-2020. Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2021), ACMJ SR (2021)



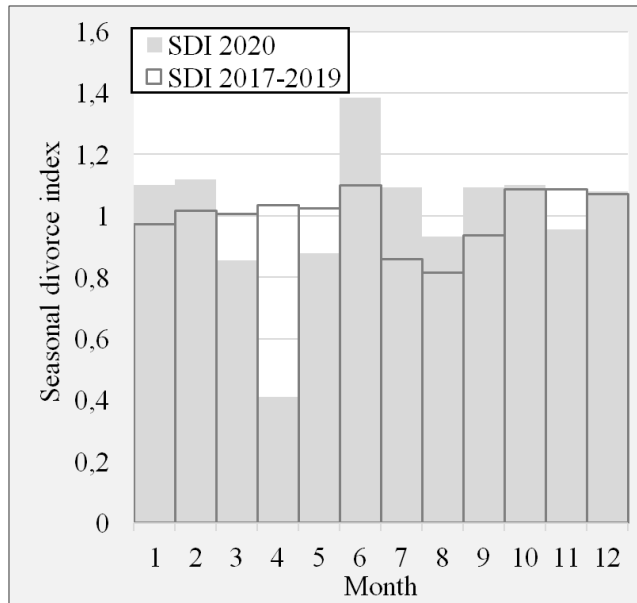
**Figure 2** Seasonal trends of selected indicators in Czechia in years 2017-2020. Source: Czech Statistical Office (2021), Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic (2021)

From the values of the seasonal divorce index shown in Figures 3 and 4 can be “jumps” in the number of divorces from 2020 observed better. According to Figure 3 and 4, the values of indices from March to May 2020 were significantly below average in both countries. Compared to the average from the years 2017 to 2019, the values from March to May 2020 are in significant contrast in both countries. On the other hand, the values of the index from the summer of 2020 are in both countries at the level of the annual average, but also above the level of the average index for the previous three years. We record the most significant values in the Czechia and Slovakia in June and July 2020, when the seasonal divorce index was at the level of almost 140%. The values of the index thus exceeded the mean annual values of the index by 40%.

According to the available data about processing of the divorce agenda, it seems that fluctuations in the number of divorces and divorce applications are mainly caused by fluctuations of court's activity. This is also indicated by the report of the Analytical Center of the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic, which states that the delaying processes of courts were caused by beginning of pandemics and measurements against it. First the courts had to adapt to the new situation. On the other hand, immediately after the pandemic restrictions were calm down, the work of the courts intensified. The same can be written about situation in Czechia, where the processing of the divorce agenda has been considerably limited since February 2020. Delays in the processing of the agenda in the courts can also be mentioned in the works of Abidin and Tobibatussa'adah (2020) and Dorneanu et al. (2021).



**Figure 3** Seasonal divorce index in Slovakia in years 2017-2020. Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2021), ACMJ SR (2021)

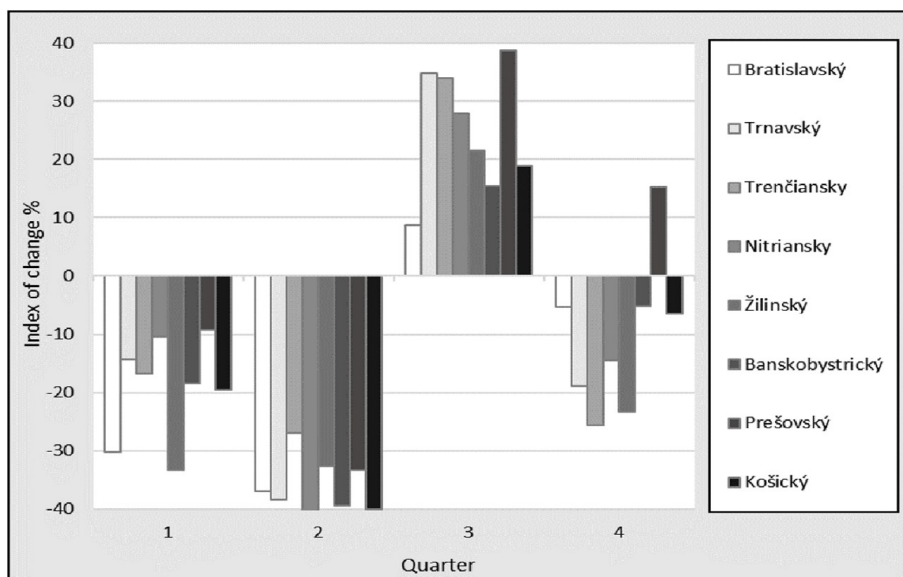


**Figure 4** Seasonal divorce index in Czechia in years 2017-2020. Source: Czech Statistical Office (2021), Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic (2021)

Although authors as Yang and Ma (2020), Pietromonaco and Overall (2021), Van Bavel et al. (2020), Abidin and Tobibatussa'adah (2020) link the current pandemic uncertainty rather with the disruption of partnerships and family relationships, according to the data we use, some factors may have contributed to the short-term postponement of divorces. For example, according to Adshade (2012) couples, especially when it comes to a dual-income household, are hesitant to divorce. The reason is that a marriage with two incomes can be understood as a certain type of unemployment insurance. If one of the partners loses the job during an economically uncertain period, the other partner may cover the loss of one income in the short term. This encourages us to consider whether the fluctuations, the initial decline and subsequent increase in divorce rates from 2020 in the Czechia and Slovakia could not be caused to extent by some initial shock of people from the pandemics, which later declined.

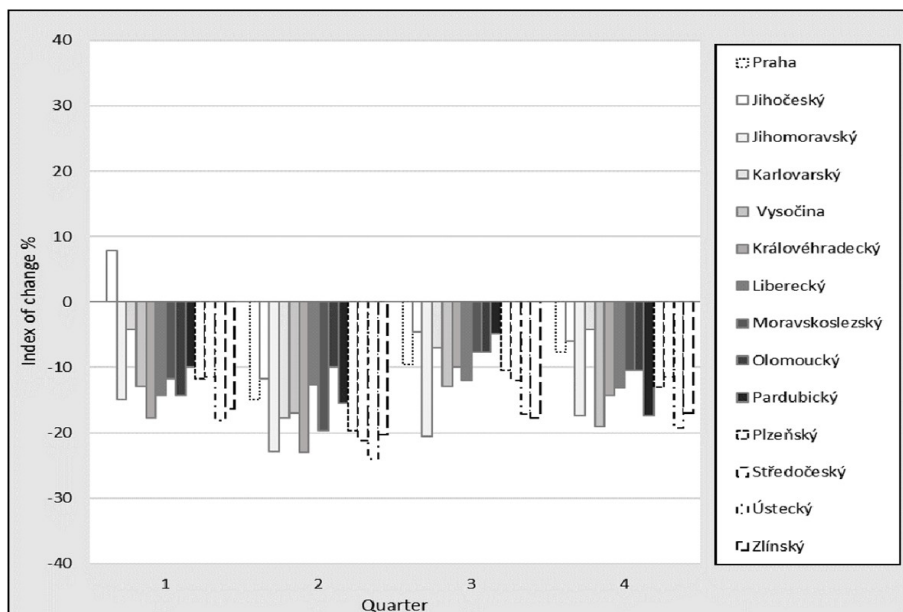
Compared to the average of 2017-2019, divorce fluctuations also occur at the regional level in both countries in 2020. As can be seen from the Figures 5 and 6, the percentage changes in crude divorce rates in the regions are more marked in Slovakia than in Czechia. In Slovakia, compared to the average of 2017-2019, there was the most significant decrease in divorce in the second quarter of 2020. On average for the regions, this is a decrease in divorce at the level of 36%. We record the most significant decline in second quarter in the Nitra region at the level of 42% and the lowest decline in the Trenčín region at only 26% compared to the previous year. Subsequently, in the third quarter of 2020, we note in the regions of Slovakia a sig-

nificantly higher divorce rate than the average for the previous years 2017-2019. The most significant increase occurs in the Prešov, Trnava and Trenčín regions. In these three regions, compared to the average of the third quarter of 2017-2019, the crude divorce rate increased by more than 30% in the given quarter of 2020. On average for the regions, the crude divorce rate increased by 25% in the third quarter of 2020. In Czechia, became in the quarters of 2020, only to decrease of the crude divorce rate compared to the average for 2017-2019. On average, we record the most significant decrease compared to 2017-2019, as in Slovakia in the second quarter of 2020. The most significant crude divorce rate fell in the Ústecký region, by up to 24% compared to the average for 2017-2019. We record the lowest decrease in the Prague region at the level of 9.5%. The lowest decrease in crude divorce rates compared to the 2017-2019 average is recorded in the first and third quarters of 2020. In the first quarter it was a decrease in the average for Czechia at the level of less than 11% and in the second at the level of 11%. The only region where the divorce rate increased in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the average of 2017-2019 was Jihočeský region. The increase was less than 8%.



**Figure 5** Seasonal divorce changes between average crude divorce rate 2017-2019 to 2020 in Slovakia. Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2021)

Overall, divorce rates are falling in both countries in 2020. The decline can be seen not only in the analysis of crude rates, but also in indicators such as the total divorce rate of a marriage or the total divorce rate. However, the further development of the trend will largely depend on the intensity and duration of some factors, such as economic uncertainty or social tension.



**Figure 6** Seasonal divorce changes between average crude divorce rate 2017-2019 to 2020 in Czechia. Source: Czech Statistical Office (2021)

## 5 CONCLUSION

Current pandemics will be one of the key economic and social determinants of the third decade of this century, at least in the first years of the decade. There is no doubt about that. However, opinions still differ on what specific effects the current pandemics will have on intimate and family relationships.

Although research on the social, psychological and behavioural aspects of the pandemics is advancing at a rocket pace, unlike virological medical research, it is still in its infancy. The main reason is the time since the start of the pandemics. However, some short-term effects are rather obvious, and research studies are documenting them. We could simply categorize such work into three groups. The first group of studies is those where the authors stated to some measure an improvement in intimate and family relationships. Further are articles in which the authors pointed out a certain deterioration of interpersonal relationships. A third group is works that can be singled out in which the authors state certain changes in intimate and family relationships on the one hand (this may also be an improvement), but on the other hand they also point out certain risks that stress factors associated with the onset of a pandemics may bring with them.

From the data about seasonal divorce trends, which are currently available from Czechia and Slovakia, it is possible to learn that in the first year of the pandemics there were fluctuations in the divorce trend. These changes ultimately caused a de-

crease in the total number of divorces compared to previous years. As fluctuations in the seasonal distribution of divorces and divorce applications in 2020 largely copy the effort of courts in a given year, we expect, the fluctuations in trend was largely caused by the volatile function of courts. After the start of the pandemics, the courts needed to adapt to the new situation, so from the beginning of the pandemics there is a reduction in the productivity of courts in the Czechia and Slovakia. At the same time, in both countries, it was necessary to respect relatively strict anti-epidemiological measures after the start of the pandemics, which also had a significant impact on the productivity of the courts. Following the calm down of the measures, the enforcement of the courts increased again, it brings also the larger number of divorce applications and divorces as well. However, as the above-mentioned works also suggest, it can not be ruled out that the jumps that occurred after the beginning of 2020 in divorce rates in Czechia and Slovakia also affected other factors, such as economic and social uncertainty.

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## **Rodiny a rozvody počas pandémie: prehľad literatúry a najnovšie empirické dôkazy z Česka a Slovenska**

### **Súhrn**

Vzťah medzi infekciami a ľudskou populáciou má dlhú históriu. Podľa dobových štúdií o výskyte infekcií, ako je napríklad tuberkulóza, tento vzťah dokonca predchádzal migrácií ľudstva z Afriky. Archeologické nálezy, ako aj písomné dokumen- ty jasne ukazujú, že choroby mali významný vplyv nielen na demografické či ekonomické aspekty života, ale aj na ľudské správanie (Page et al., 1956; Hays, 2005; Norrie, 2016; McMillen, 2017). Napríklad podľa spisov gréckeho historika

a politika Thúkydida z čias antických epidémií v rokoch 430 – 427 pred Kristom prichádzalo v Aténach vtedy k závažným porušeniam práv a spoločenských noriem. Mnohí učenci tej doby to považovali za kolaps aténskej morálky (Hays, 2005). Thukydidés ponúka nasledujúce svedectvo o období úpadku spoločnosti: „V čase epidémie muži začali robiť verejne, to čo predtým robili niekde v kúte, aj to nie vždy kedy sa im to hodilo. Keď však videli, že ľudia žijúci v prosperite rýchlo zomierajú a tí čo predtým nemali nič sa úspešne dostávajú k ich majetku, rozhodli sa rýchlo mŕňať a užívať si svoj majetok. Ustálilo sa, že súčasné potešenie a všetko, čo k nemu prispieva, je čestné a užitočné. Opadol strach z bohov alebo súdu a už nikto neočakával, že bude predvedený za svoje trestné činy pred súd.“ (Page a kol. 1956, s. 353.). S príchodom súčasnej pandémie a rôznych opatrení na zastavenie šírenia ochorenia rovnako čelíme nielen ekonomickým, spoločenským, ale aj demografickým zmenám. Obdobie po začatí pandémie sa stalo predmetom mnohých odborných štúdií. Podľa viacerých takýchto prác môžu situácie spojené so súčasnou pandemiou prinášať do rodinných a intímnych vzťahov určité pnutie. Tlak vyvolaný pandemiou sa následne môže negatívne prejavovať na kvalite intímnych a rodinných vzťahov. Vzťahy sa tak stávajú krehkejšími, to môže následne viesť až k ich rozpadu. Práve z tohto dôvodu uvádzame zhrnutie prác, ktoré sa zameriavajú na vplyv súčasnej situácie na intímne a rodinné vzťahy. Ďalej by sme radi odpovedali (skúsili odpovedať) na výskumné otázky: *Spôsobuje situácia spojená so súčasnou pandemiou zhoršenie intímnych vzťahov? Je vplyv pandémie na intímne vzťahy taký výrazný, že dochádza k výraznému nárastu rozvodovosti alebo noapak? Zmenil sa po vypuknutí pandémie na Slovensku v Česku trend rozvodovosti?*

Súčasná pandémia bude jedným z kľúčových ekonomických a sociálnych determinantov tretieho desaťročia tohto storočia alebo aspoň v prvých rokoch tohto storočia. O tom niet pochyb. Názory na to, aké konkrétne dopady bude mať súčasná pandémia na intímne a rodinné vzťahy, sa však stále líšia. Hoci výskum sociálnych, psychologických a behaviorálnych aspektov pandemií napreduje raketovým tempom, na rozdiel od virologického medicínskeho výskumu je stále v plienkach. Hlavným dôvodom je čas od začiatku pandémie. Niektoré krátkodobé účinky sú však dosť zrejme a výskumné štúdie ich dokumentujú. Zjednodušene by sme takéto práce mohli kategorizovať do troch skupín. Prvou skupinou štúdií sú tie, kde autori do určitej miery konštatovali zlepšenie intímnych a rodinných vzťahov. Ďalej sú tu články, v ktorých autori poukázali na určité zhoršovanie medziľudských vzťahov. Treťou skupinou sú práce, v ktorých autori na jednej strane uvádzajú určité zmeny v intímnych a rodinných vzťahoch (aj to môže byť zlepšenie), no na druhej strane poukazujú aj na riziká, ktoré môže priniesť pandémia.

Z údajov o sezónnej rozvodovosti (mesačného rozvodového indexu), ktoré sú v súčasnosti dostupné v Česku a Slovensku je možné zistiť, že v prvom roku pandémie došlo k výkyvom v rozvodovosti. Tieto zmeny v konečnom dôsledku spôsobili pokles celkového počtu rozvodov v porovnaní s predchádzajúcimi rokmi. Nakoľko výkyvy v sezónnych trendoch rozvodovosti a počtoch žiadostí o rozvod v roku 2020 do značnej miery kopírujú výkony súdov v danom roku predpokladáme, že výkyvy v trende boli do značnej miery spôsobené volatílnym výkonom súdov. Po vypuknutí pandémie sa sudy potrebovali prispôsobiť novej situácii, a tak od začiatku pandémie dochádza k znižovaniu produktivity súdov v Česku aj na Slovensku. Zároveň v oboch krajinách bolo potrebné po začatí pandémie rešpektovať pomerne prísne protiepidemiologické opatrenia, čo malo výrazný vplyv na produktivitu rozličných inštitúcií, medzi nimi aj súdov. Po zmiernení opatrení sa opäť zvýšila výkonnosť súdov, to prinieslo väčší počet žiadostí o rozvod a tiež rozvodov. Ako však naznačujú aj vyššie uvedené práce nemožno vylúčiť, že skoky, ku ktorým prišlo po začiatku roka 2020 v rozvodovosti v Česku a na Slovensku ovplyvnili aj iné faktory, akými sú ekonomická a sociálna neistota.