

The founding of the Czech Republic in 1993, following the collapse of the state-socialist system in the former Czechoslovakia in 1989, ushered in economic liberalization and reforms in social and family policies that led to many new life choices and opportunities for self-realization for young people.

Economic and social changes were accompanied by a massive decline in the total fertility rate (TFR), which fell from 1.89 births per woman in 1990 to an extreme low level of 1.13 births per woman in 1999. Since then the TFR recovered gradually, reaching 1.50 births per woman in 2008. Following a temporary decline during the recent economic recession, total fertility rebounded to 1.53 births per woman in 2014.

Family transformations

The rapid fertility decline in the 1990s was largely fueled by the postponement of marriage and childbearing. During the state-socialist era, one half of women were married before age 22, while by 2013, women's average age at first marriage was 28.5 years. Similarly before the 1990s, women were most likely to give birth in a narrow age range of 19 to 25 years. Between 1990 and 2013, fertility plummeted among this age group and increased almost fourfold among women above age 35.

Age-specific fertility rates among women aged 15–45, Czech Republic, 1995 and 2013

For many young adults, early marriage was replaced by prolonged periods of living with parents or cohabiting with a partner. In 2013, one half of Czech men and about one third of Czech women aged 25–29 lived with their parents.

Cohabitation has

The quick adoption of modern contraception was an important aspect of this transformation. Up until the early 1990s, many couples used traditional contraceptive methods, many pregnancies were unplanned, and abortion was frequent. Between 1990 and 2007, the share of women of reproductive age using the pill rose from 4 per cent to 48 per cent, and abortion rates plummeted.

Family policies, labour markets and persistent attitudes about gender roles and childcare have not caught up with this development. Highly educated women are trapped in an "incomplete gender revolution", in which they find it difficult to reconcile family and career plans.

As a result, university-educated women tend to have lower completed fertility than women with less education. Among women born between 1966 and 1970, those with elementary or