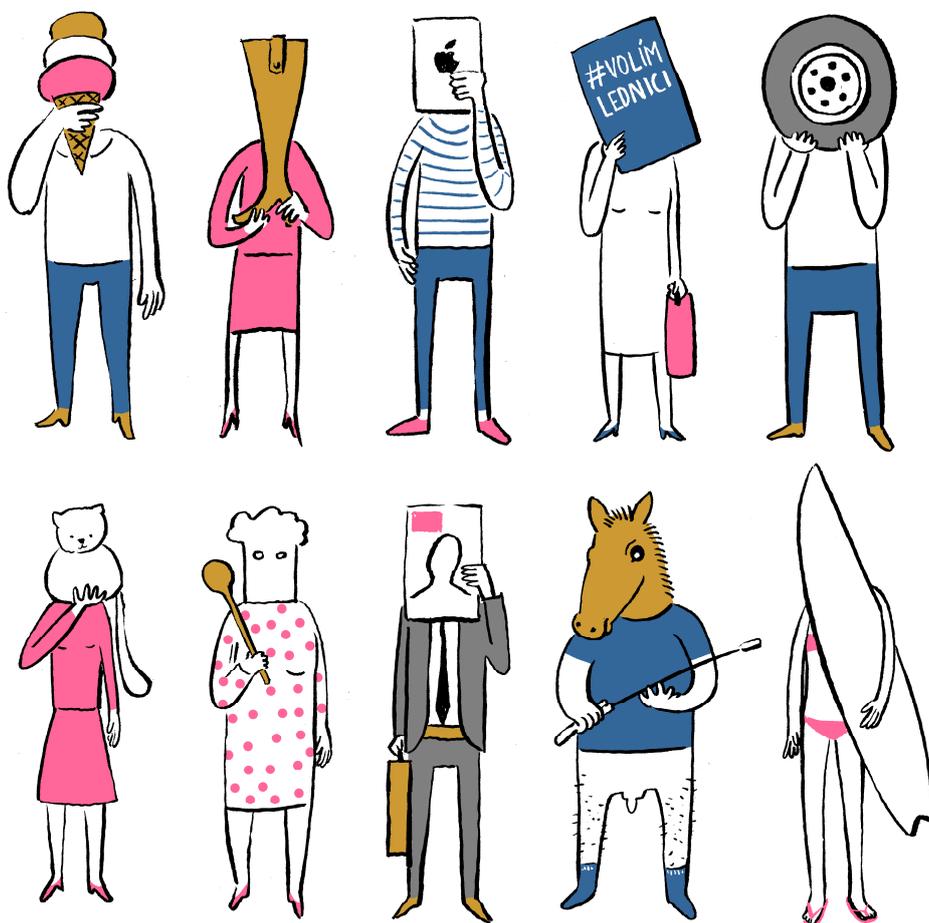


Donath Business & Media
MRThink

Who are Czech bloggers? Blogbarometer 2014

Final report of survey



Prague, June 2014

Table of contents

Table of contents	2
Does anyone blog anymore?.....	3
About the survey.....	4
Key findings	5
The Czech blogger is a young woman	6
"Scribo, ergo sum"	8
Why do Czechs blog?.....	9
Most common subjects.....	10
How many people are reading this?	11
Bloggers' muses.....	13
Interconnection of blogs and social networks	14
Blogging ethics	15
Less vulgarity and hostility	18
Money and benefits	19
Who makes contacts?	21
About the authors	24
Free distribution statement.....	24
Contact	24

Does anyone blog anymore?

This question was one of the first reactions to our call to join the survey. Using the language of the younger generation, are blogs *in* or *out*? This of course provoked questions of whether we were treading on thin ice with the survey and whether bloggers would pay any attention. The Czech blogger population, however, did not disappoint us. On the contrary: The bloggers surprised us with their frankness and willingness to share their views. In terms of the number of respondents in European countries where the survey was conducted under the auspices of our partners in the international network IPREX, we won hands down. Many thanks are due to all the respondents, authors and the back office staff.

The survey tabled a number of topics related, to put it simply, to the freedom of expression on the Internet, the authors' responsibility for their statements, the language and moral quality of some often almost vulgar reactions to other people's views. Responsibility is the other face of the freedom to speak and write our minds. A difference of opinion can do no harm; what matters is how we express it. There is no written code of ethics on the Internet. This makes it all the more important for the authors of blogs, posts, comments and various statements about other people's literary endeavors to hold to high standards, including the quality of language used. Most Czech bloggers do so. Decency, responsibility and respect of others will always be *in* regardless of whether blogging is growing stronger or weaker. This applies doubly to social networks, which are so much in vogue today.

Michal Donath

About the survey

The survey was conducted as part of the larger project IPREX BLOGBAROMETER™ 2014, launched by the international network of PR agencies IPREX Global Communication in several European countries: Finland, Italy, Ireland, Germany, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The Donath Business & Media PR agency conducted the survey in the Czech Republic online between April 22 and May 5, 2014, in cooperation with the MR Think consultancy. The purpose was to map out the Czech blogosphere.

Altogether, 394 respondents participated in the survey, of whom 296 responded to the invitation sent initially to 1,191 bloggers (24.9% of those addressed). Another 98 respondents answered the call on Facebook and the iDnes news portal. Unlike the DBM 2012 survey of journalists, we had no well-defined blogger population. This is why we based this survey on the intuitive perception that the respondents include beginners as well as seasoned bloggers with a blogging history of more than 10 years, from both big cities and smaller communities.

Key findings

According to this survey, the typical Czech blogger is a young woman aged 15-34 who writes about cosmetics, fashion and cooking, while men dominate in covering technical and political subjects. These findings make the Czech Republic no different from other European countries. The average age of the bloggers who responded is about 31; in Germany and the United Kingdom, it is 40 and 36, respectively.

Bloggers usually write posts several times a month (36.0%) or a week (35.5%). No less than 14.0% of Czech bloggers contribute in English. Less than one-quarter of the authors contribute to more than one blog.

The most popular blogging subjects are beauty and cosmetics (28.3%), and fashion, style and apparel (22.8%). Ranking third is blogging on food, cooking and drink (19.6%), and travel is fourth (19.3%).

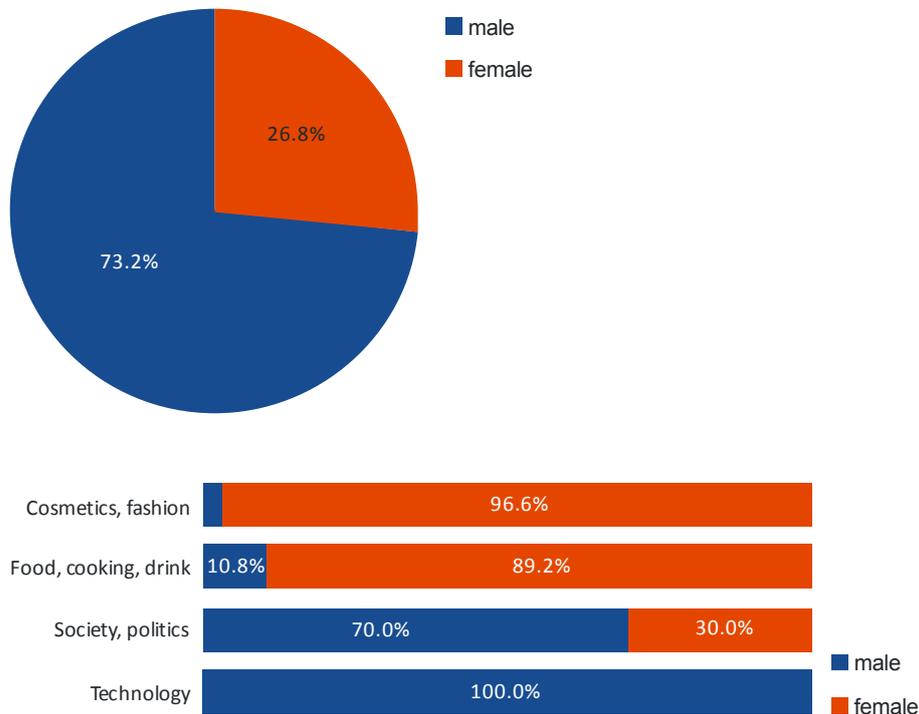
Most respondents (62.3%) have been blogging for less than five years, although several authors taking part in the survey started blogging 18 or even 20 years ago.

Almost half of the respondents (47.7%) stated that blogging brought them financial and other benefits, or they planned them for the future, although only 4.5% said this was important. The most common forms of such benefits are free samples of products, invitations to various events or advertising revenue. For their own publicity, bloggers predominantly use Facebook (57.0%). About one-third (33.9%) of the bloggers have been addressed directly by firms offering cooperation.

In view of bloggers' ethics, the respondents fall into three almost equal groups: 33.7% believe the same ethical standards should apply to them as to journalists, 34.0% deny this and 32.3% do not know.

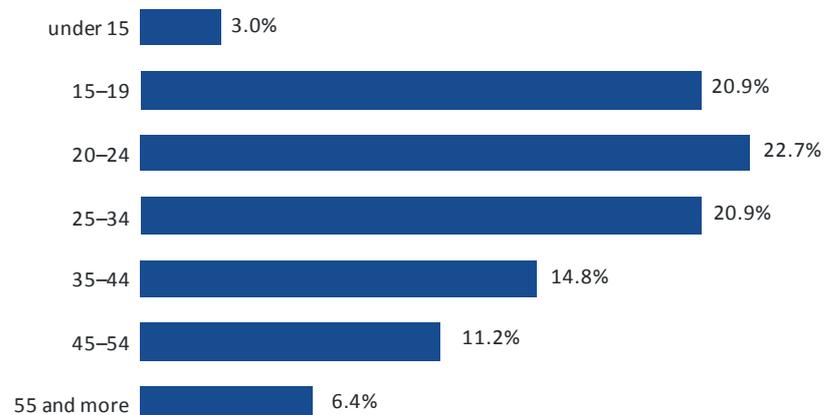
The majority of the respondents (58.8%) consider hostility and vulgarity to be the main problems in the Czech blogosphere. 36.2% of the bloggers cite breach of copyright to texts and images, and 27.2% mention inadequate verification of sources.

The Czech blogger is a young woman

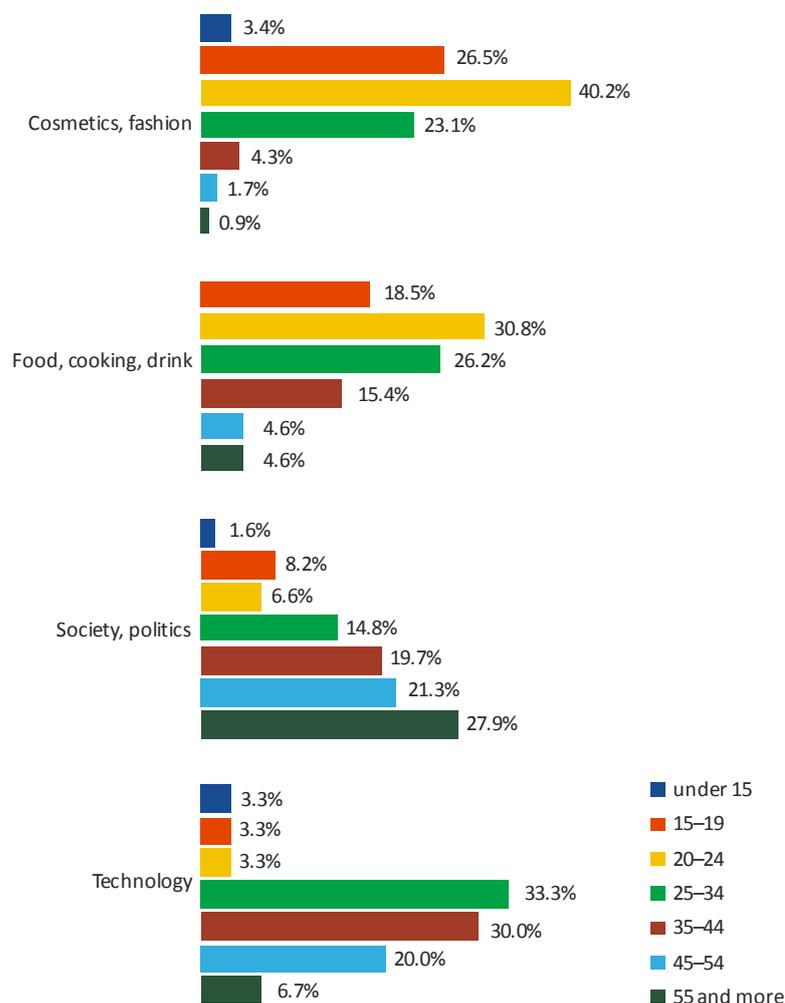


The typical Czech blogger is a young woman, aged 15-34, who writes about cosmetics, fashion or cooking. This makes the Czech Republic no exception among other European countries. This nevertheless does not rule out typically masculine blogging areas. While women dominate in areas like cosmetics, fashion, food, cooking and drink, men prevail in technology, society and politics.

Age of bloggers involved



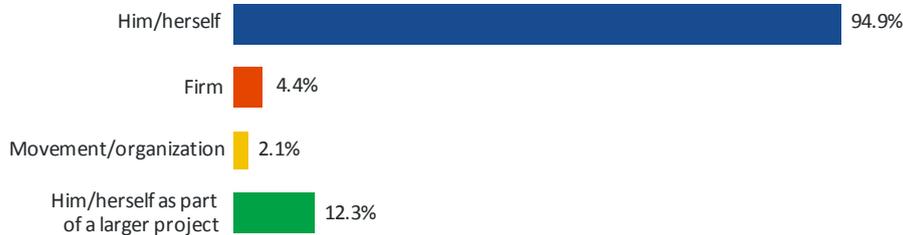
Bloggers' age by subject



The average age of bloggers taking part in the survey is about 31. The Czech Republic and Finland are at the other end of the IPREX BLOGBAROMETER™ 2014 spectrum than Germany and the United Kingdom, which have an average age of 40 and 36, respectively. Regional differences in Europe may be due to the time when blogging became popular, or due to the emergence of thematic blogs. The diagram *Bloggers' age by subject* suggests differences in age structure of Czech authors by blogging subject. We already know that men are more interested in political and technological subjects but it is now apparent that they are also the more senior bloggers. The detailed age structure of authors writing on technology suggests that the activities of the younger population take place outside blogs and on social networks. This seems to be confirmed by other research studies.

"Scribo, ergo sum"

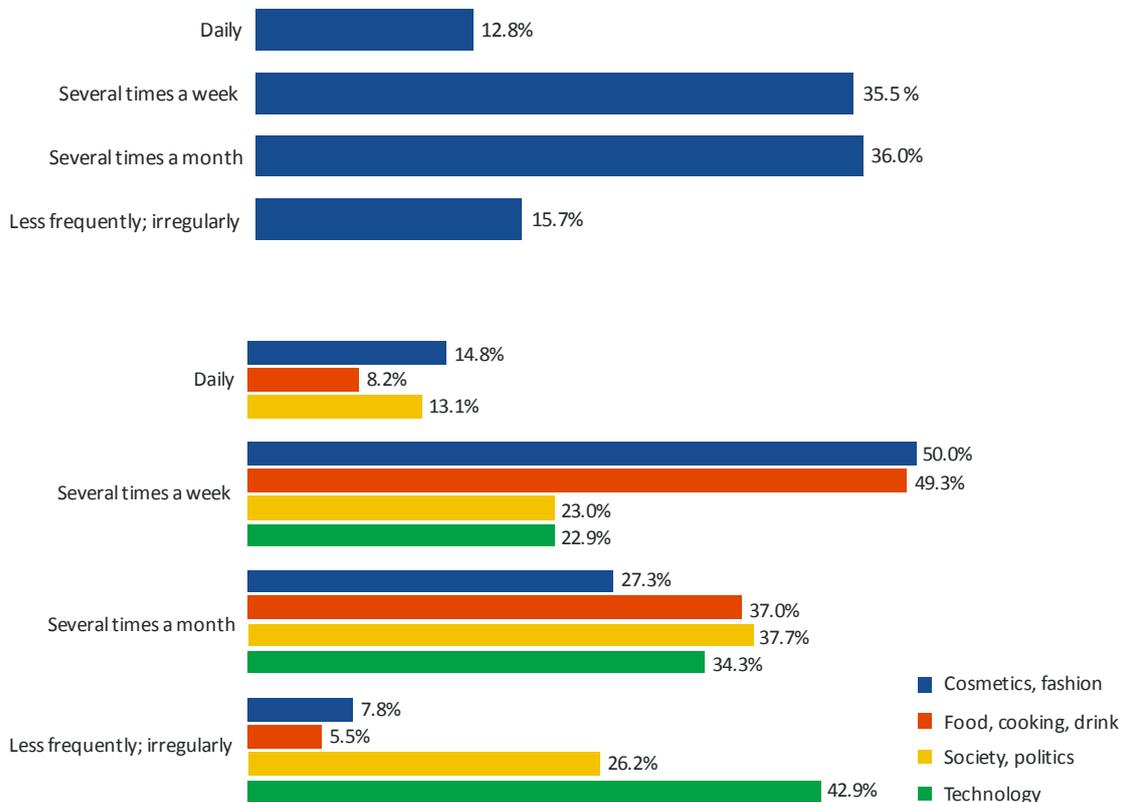
Whom they blog for



Every fourth blogger (26.5%) taking part in the survey writes more than one blog. These authors on average contribute to nearly three blogs. 96% of the respondents blog in Czech, 14% in English, 4% in Slovak and 2% in other languages. The sum is more than 100% as some authors blog in more than one language.

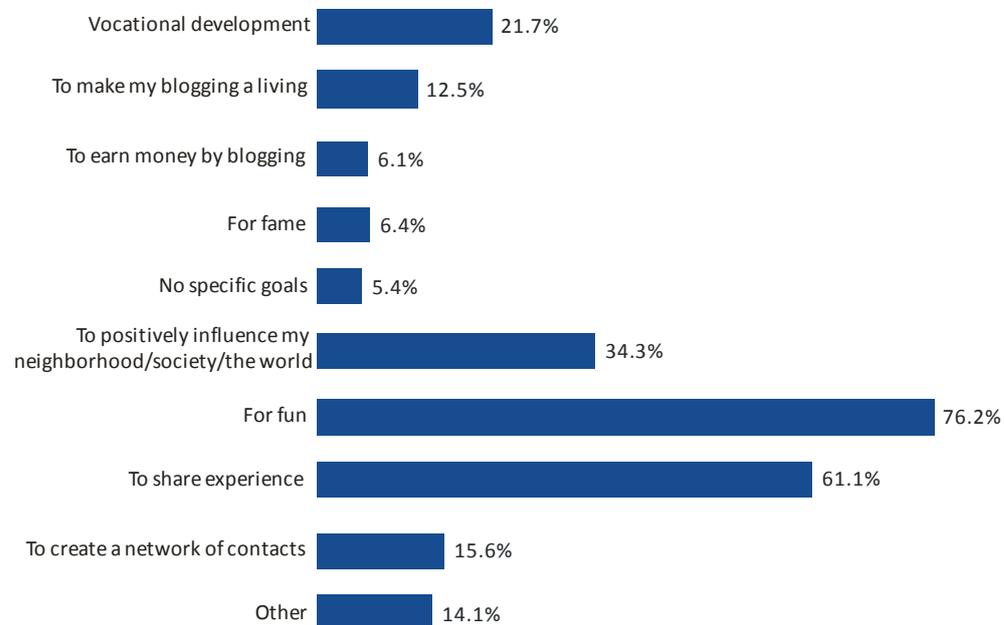
The vast majority of the authors (94.9%) write their texts and projects for themselves, and 12.3% of the bloggers write as part of a larger project (12.3%). A minimum of the respondents blog for a firm (4.4%) or a movement (2.1%). 12.8% of the respondents contribute daily, 35.5% several times a week, 36.0% several times a month and 15.7% less frequently. Authors of blogs on cosmetics, fashion, cooking, food and drink write more frequently than those who comment on political and social events, or technological bloggers.

How often they blog



Why do Czechs blog?

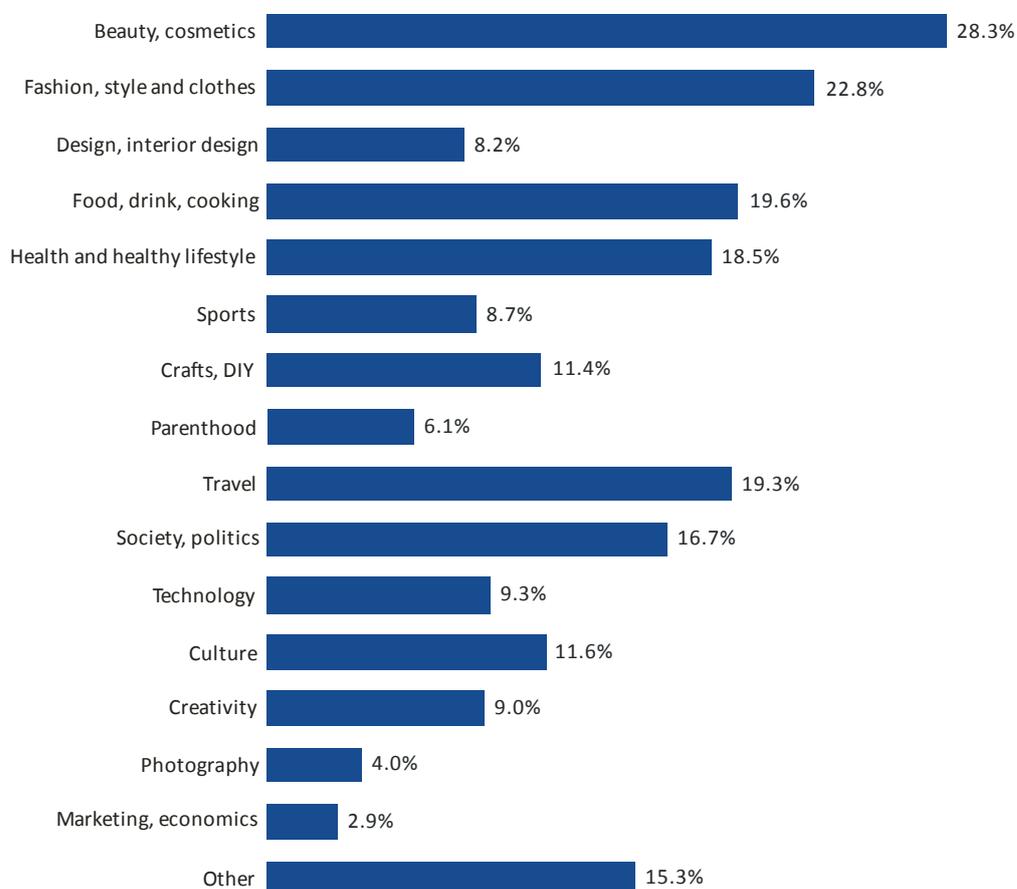
Why they blog (It was possible to select up to three reasons)



The respondents cite most frequently as the main reasons for blogging fun (76.2%) and the intention to share experience (61.1%), which often go hand-in-hand. One-third of the bloggers (34.3%) want to emanate a positive influence on life around them; vocational development is important for one-fifth (21.7%). 6.1% of the respondents admit a wish to earn money by blogging, yet only 52.4% of the bloggers deny the ambition to make blogging a source of income or other benefits.

Most common subjects

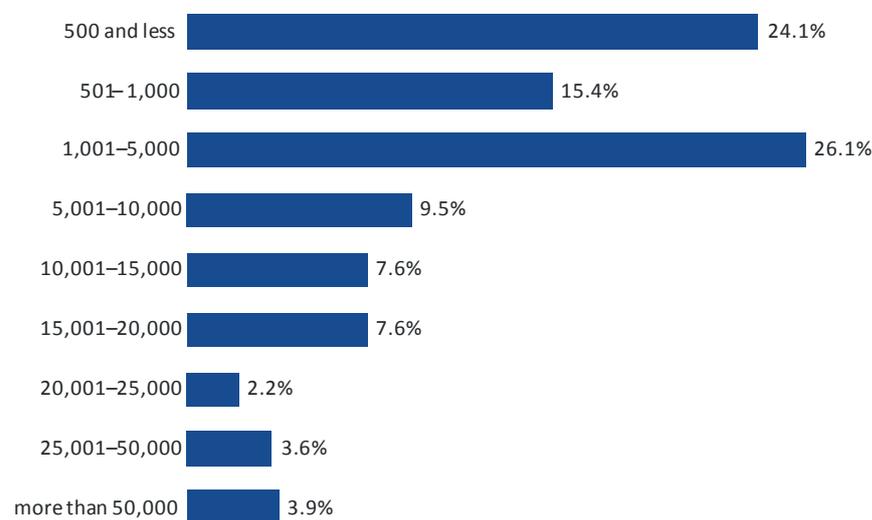
(Multiple options were allowed)



On average, Czech bloggers have more than two main topics. The most popular among the respondents was writing on beauty and cosmetics (28.3%) and fashion, style and clothes (22.8%). These two subjects are most frequently combined. Ranking third was blogging on food, drink and cooking (19.6%) and travel (19.3%). Bloggers writing on food often also write on health and healthy lifestyles. Health and sports are also frequently combined. Blogging on crafts and DIY is often combined with design. The main topics of the Czech blogosphere correspond with the most common categories in IPREX BLOGBAROMETER™ 2014.

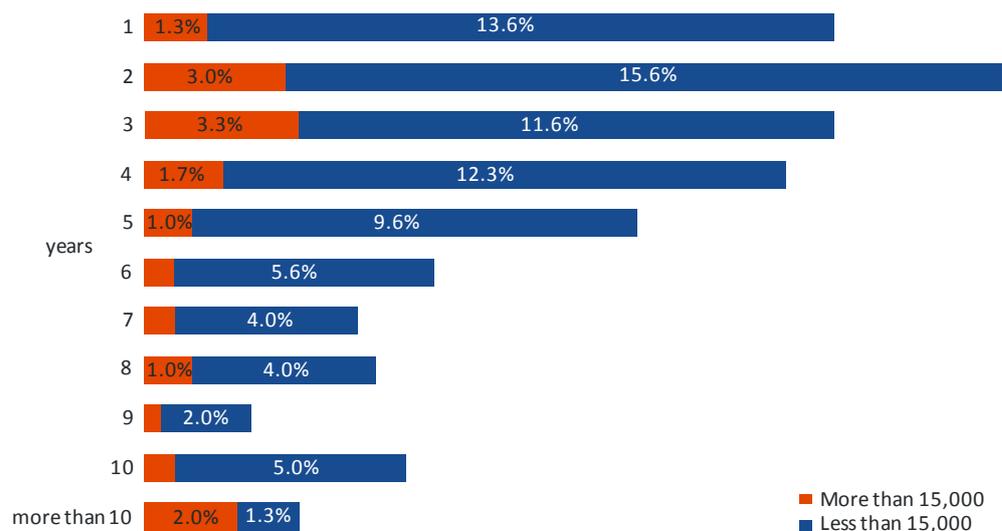
How many people are reading this?

Unique visitors per month



Are bloggers interested in knowing how many readers they have? Some write for specific groups of friends or fans and are indifferent to the size of their readership, while for others it is a matter of potential income or influence. 3.9% of the authors have more than 50,000 unique visitors monthly. This rate is comparable with the websites of well-heeled specialized magazines. It goes without saying that e.g. English or Spanish blogs have larger potentials of readership than the Czech ones, so it is no surprise that IPREX BLOGBAROMETER™ 2014 cites 10 authors, each with more than half a million single visitors a month.

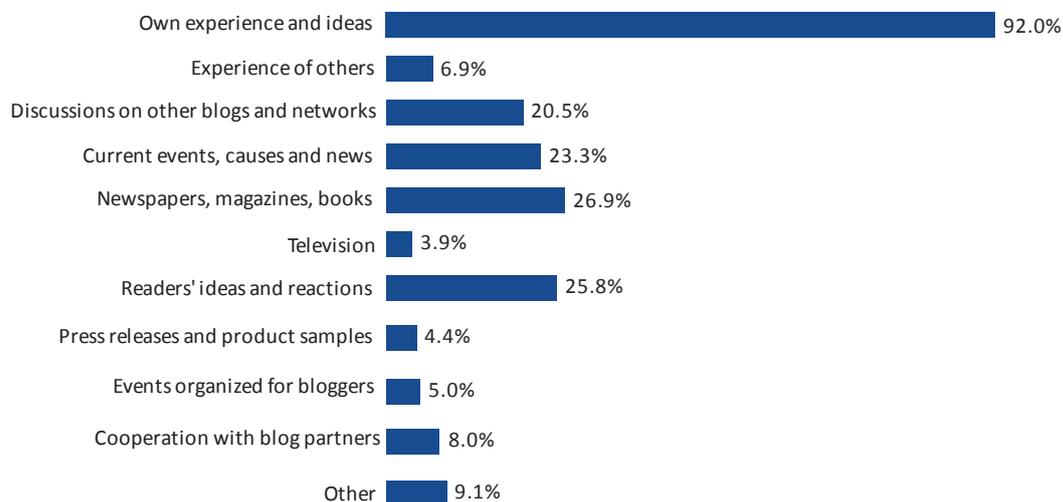
We were also interested in the relation between the visitor rate and the age of the blog. The diagram *How many years I have been blogging* shows in red ink the share of authors who attract more than 15,000 unique visitors monthly in specific years of their blogging career. Altogether they comprise 15.6% of our respondents. Our sample shows that the largest number of the widest-read authors is among the third-year bloggers, but they are proportionately most numerous among those who have been blogging for more than 10 years (60.6%). The diagram *How many years I have been blogging* reflects two trends. One of them is increasing "mortality" with the blogging years. The other is the growing popularity in the past few years of blogging on certain subjects, such as cooking, food or fashion.



Most respondents (62.3%) have been blogging for less than five years, although some old-timers who took part in the survey started writing 18 or 20 years ago. The monthly visitor rate in 65.6% of the bloggers does not exceed 5,000.

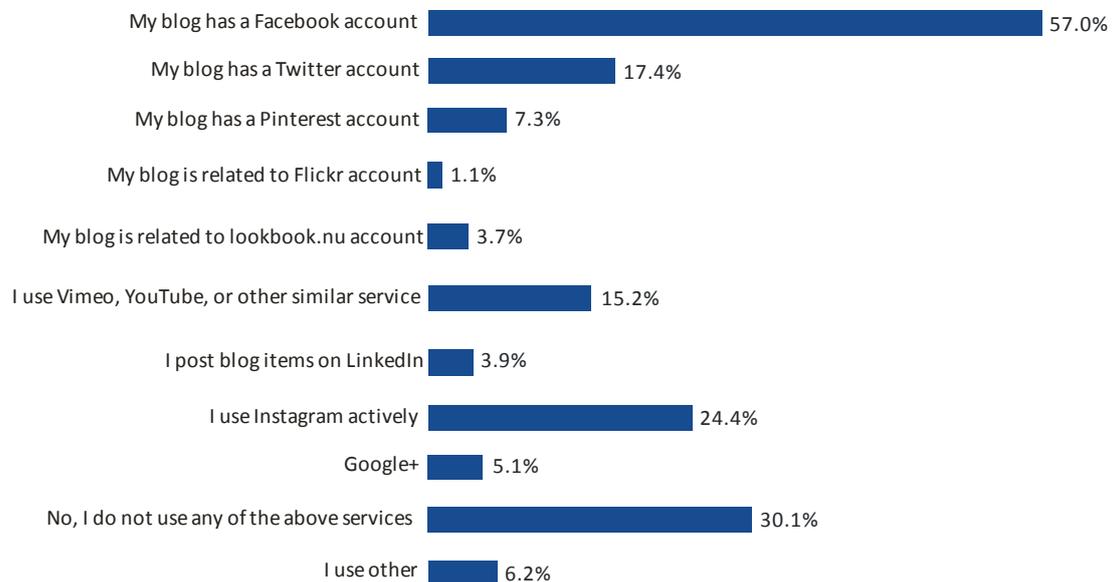
Bloggers' muses

Where do authors find information and ideas?
(Up to three main options were allowed)



This diagram clearly confirms that blogs are a creative activity. 92% of the respondents state that they take topics and information from their own experience and ideas. They take other important inspiration from readers (25.8%), discussions on other blogs or social networks (20.5%) or the media – newspapers, magazines and books (26.9%). Current events, issues and news are another important source (23.3%).

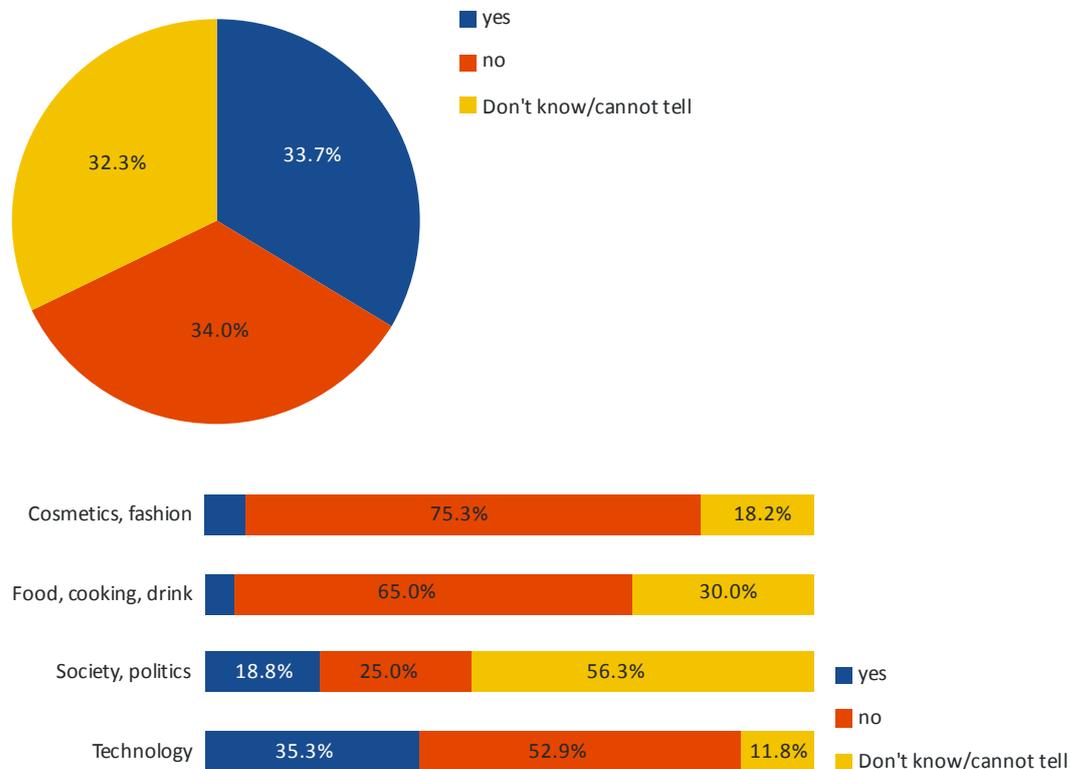
Interconnection of blogs and social networks



Only 23.9% of the respondents state they do not promote their blogs using social networks. 57.0% of the bloggers use Facebook, 24.4% use Instagram, and 17.4% use Twitter. According to the results of IPREX BLOGBAROMETER™ 2014, Czech bloggers lag significantly behind Europe in this respect. In the European countries surveyed, 73.9% of the bloggers use Facebook, 47.1% use Instagram, and 56.5% use Twitter.

Blogging ethics

Should the same ethical standards apply to both bloggers and journalists?



If the blogger by nature of his/her activity is a virtual journalist, should the same ethical standards that apply to journalists also apply to bloggers? Answering this question, the respondents fall into three almost equally large groups. 33.7% of them believe the same ethical rules should apply to bloggers, 34.0% deny this, and 32.3% do not know.

In this respect, the differences in bloggers' views have to do with the subject on which they write. The most radical "no" (75.3%) to ethical rules comes from bloggers on cosmetics and fashion. Advocates of the same ethical rules as those that apply to journalists are most numerous among bloggers on technology (35.3%). Still stronger is this agreement among former journalists-turned-bloggers (40.0%) though 44.0% of them reject such an idea.

The survey of authors' intentions aims to initiate a debate of this matter among bloggers themselves. Below we offer some views that respondents added to their replies:

"I am not sure if it should be exactly the same rules, but some ethical rules should also apply to bloggers."

"What matters is the quality of information. It should be truthful. But a subjective approach is also to be reckoned with. Readers should also be tolerant of mistakes"

(e.g. in spelling); after all, a blog is not backed by a whole team of [editors] and proofreaders."

"I am not sure if the same [rules] should apply as for journalists, but certainly general ethical rules (in fact it should be the same)."

"Not quite, as a blog is the author's personal profile; his views are subjective, while a journalist has to write objectively for the public at large. A blog is focused only on a certain segment of visitors..."

"It should not be a profession but a 'game'."

"A certain measure of decency. No offence and vulgarity. Effort for objectiveness. Presentation of other sources and facts as well. A measure of tolerance."

"I believe a blog is fantastic just because one can present his views there more than, say, a journalist can, and does not have to restrict himself by prohibitions and commands from elsewhere. It is in fact something like a journal, but of greater literary value and destined for the public. Of course, some rules should apply, but otherwise I think it should be left to the blogger's judgment what he presents and what he doesn't."

"Journalists are limited by their profession, their employer and the owner of the medium, the editorial demands and, last but not least, self-censorship. Except the last one, the blogger should not be subject to these limitations, unless it is a specific medium."

"No, because most journalists are not too worried about ethical rules."

"Nobody can command him anything; he is the master of his blog."

"I can't see journalists being subject to ethical anything."

"Some decency should be the norm, but sometimes one would love not to mince his words."

"A blogger can allow himself more than a journalist because he is not a professional journalist. He can allow himself to be less objective and less correct, to give his views a sharper wording than a professional commentator. On the other hand, he should also try to avoid spreading nonsense and should not manipulate facts, distort the truth or lie."

"A blogger should realize that anyone can read what he writes. Therefore he should not write about absolutely everything; he should respect certain limits. I mean vulgar expressions, attacks on others, etc. Otherwise, on the contrary, the right to express one's view should be upheld but one should use common sense as to what he can write and what is too much. ☺"

"If we are talking about a more 'professional' kind of blogs, then YES."

"If I blog for myself, then it is about freedom of expression, and many journalist limits are irrelevant ... but some legal restrictions apply (slandering of competitors, etc.)."

"I favor absolute freedom of expression. Who should assess the ethical propriety of contributions? Who should select the contributions to my blog? Bloggers express their views on the Internet, and the Internet should be an absolutely free medium with no restrictions at all. I am willing to accept the potential risks."

"Blogging is in fact journalism without censorship, to some extent, one could say. That makes it all the more important to consider ethics ourselves."

"It does not seem to me that journalists are subject to any ethical rules."

"I say NO although in fact I think YES. Ethics is a strictly subjective matter, in my opinion. A blog is (at least for me) a strictly subjective and personal space, so I do not feel bound by any rules except those I identify with. Therefore I do not think a blogger should go by any external rules. That is why I say NO."

"If blogging is for fun, I see no reason to take care about how it is written. On the other hand, if the blogger writes for money, for a company, then ethical rules should apply."

"The output of journalists may be quite varied, but there should always be some basic rules."

"This largely depends on the type and the subject of the blog."

"It will probably differ from blog to blog, but my blog is mine, and I can write whatever I want there."

"A blog should associate people with the same interests and hobbies, and if it should be subject to some ethical and social conventions, such association would be impaired, because blogging is just a means of communicating views, as among friends. The reader deserves to get correct information, written decently and without slandering other bloggers. On the other hand, the contributions should include the author's own subjective view."

"A blog is a personal view; journalists should mediate information. The question is misleading though. A journalist in the Czech Republic usually just interprets opinions, for which he/she is paid. A blogger only presents his/her own opinion. The notion that bloggers, too, will write as somebody solicits them to runs contrary to the very reason for the existence of blogs. The terms 'journalist' and 'ethical rules' cancel each other out in the Czech Republic today."

"I do not think bloggers should be as objective as journalists."

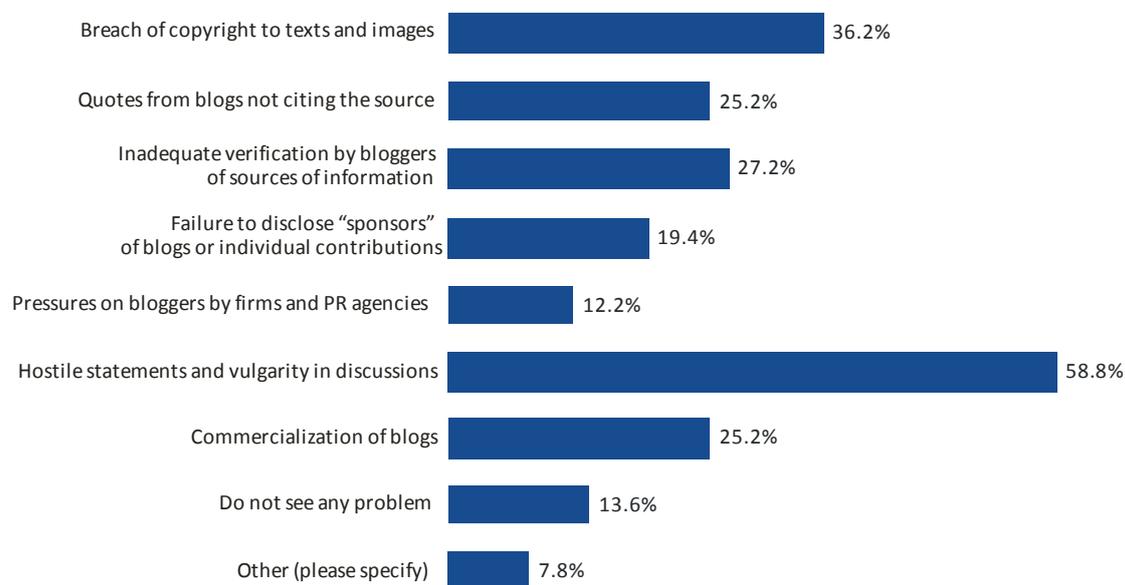
"Journalists have ethical rules?"

"I do not think a blogger should honor the rule of X independent sources, he writes for himself, so he can even write nonsense or misleading information, as long as he finds readers."

"Ethical principles are general enough for anyone to go by them."

Less vulgarity and hostility

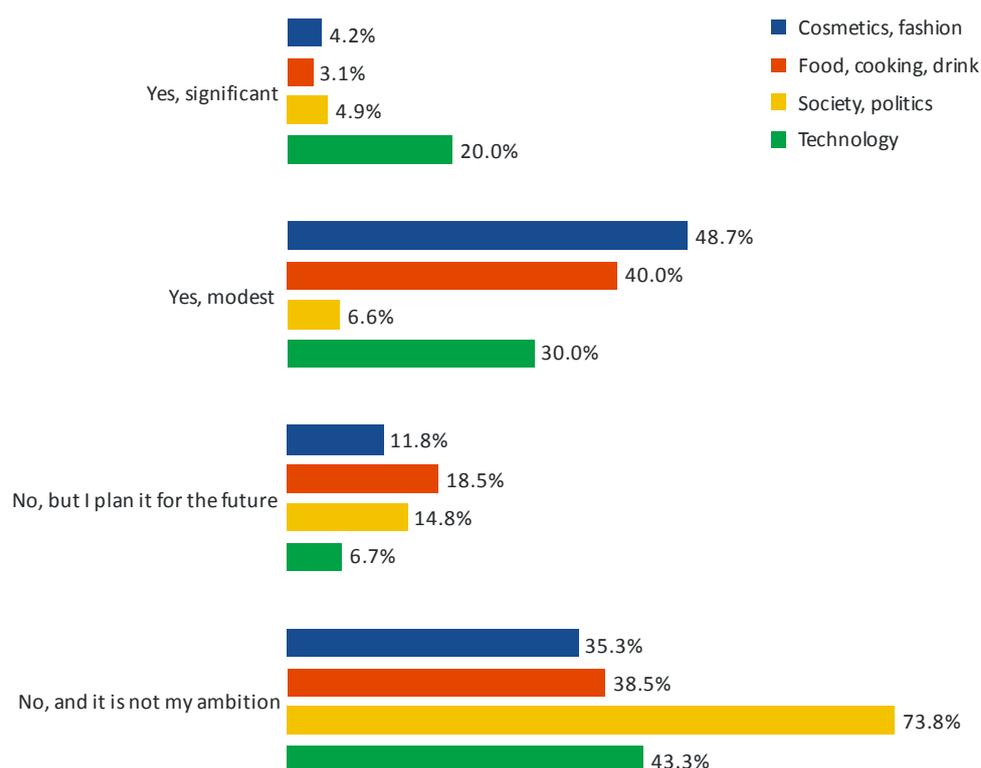
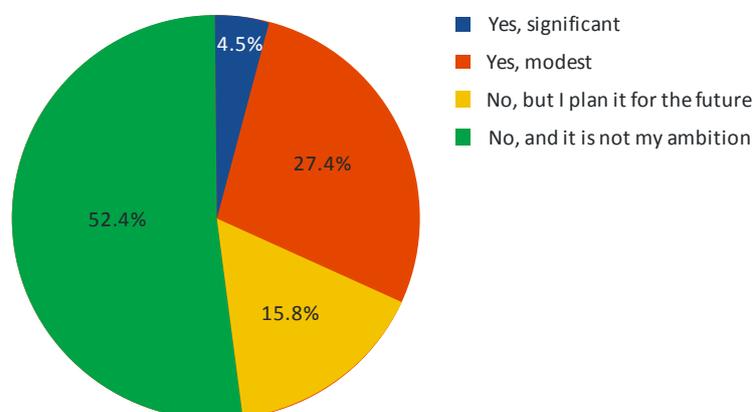
Which of the points below are most characteristic of the problems of the national blog scene? (Select up to three main points)



Most respondents see hostile statements and vulgarity in discussions as a problem of the Czech blogosphere (58.8%). This is a general vice all of the media suffer from on the Internet. 36.2% of the bloggers cite breach of copyright to texts and images, and 27.2% cite inadequate verification of sources. These problems are related to the journalist ethics discussed in the previous chapter. 25.2% of the bloggers complain about blogs being also quoted from without citing the source. The same number of bloggers sees commercialization of blogs as a problem.

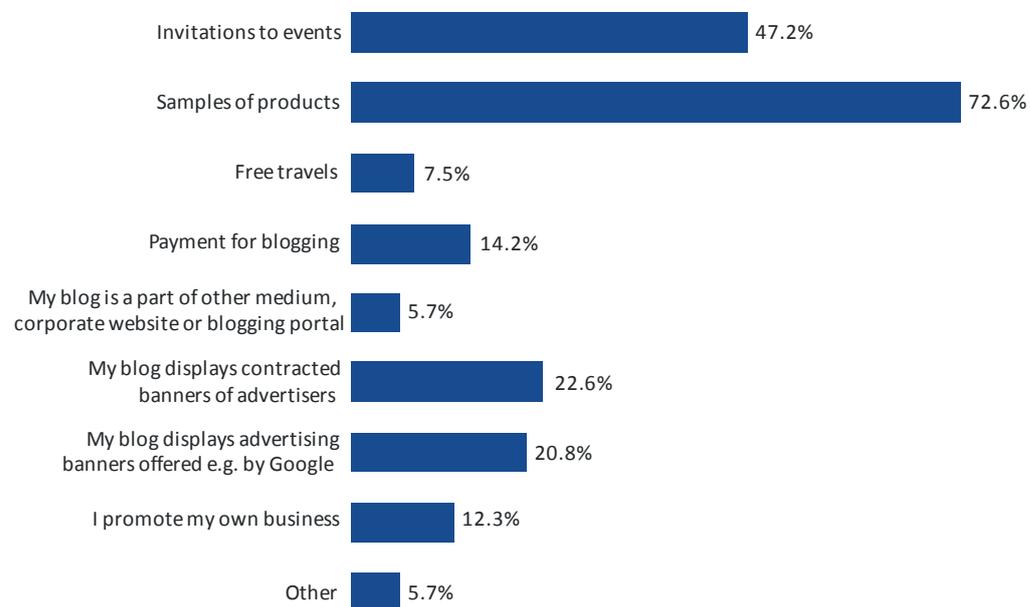
Money and benefits

Do you have financial or other benefits from blogging?



Only 6.1% of the respondents cited monetary gains as one of the main reasons for their blogging (See *Why do Czechs blog?*). Yet 47.7% of the respondents admit they have financial or other benefits from blogging or they plan for them in the future. This matter is related to the professionalization and commercialization of a limited group of blogs. Only 4.5% of the respondents have significant income and benefits; 27.4% have only modest ones. We asked these two groups of bloggers about the specific kinds of their income.

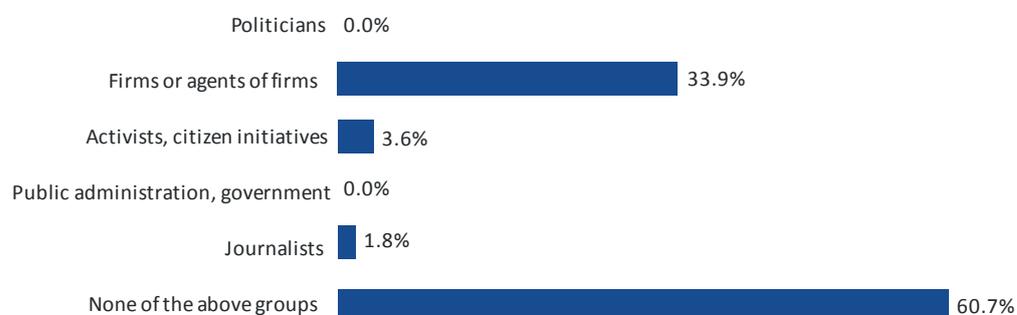
What kind of income or other benefits do blogs yield to their authors?



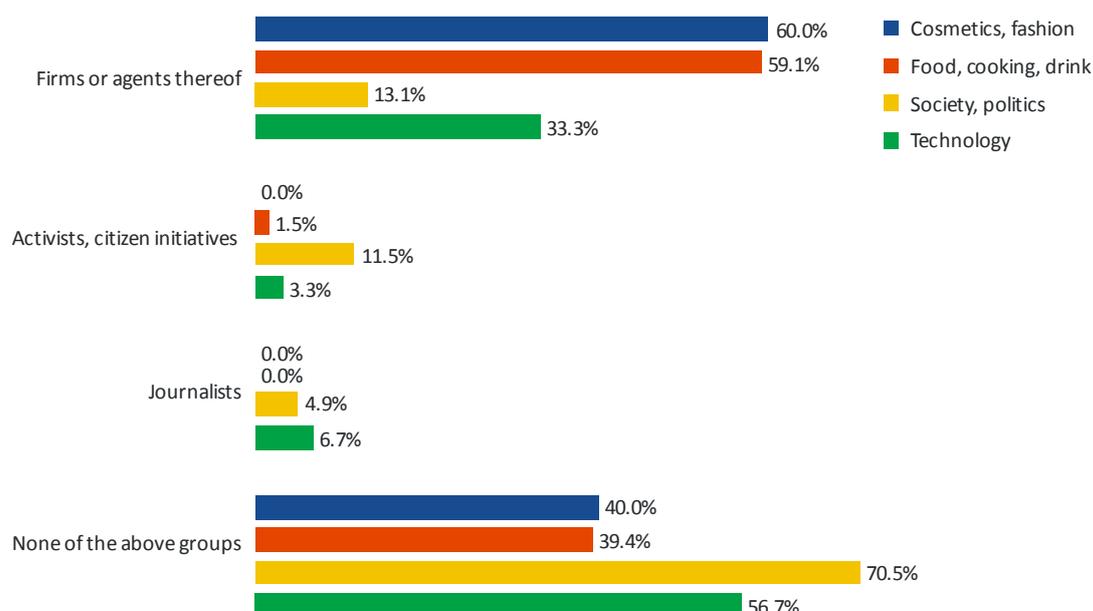
The most common forms of blogger benefits are free samples of products (72.6%) and invitations to various events (47.2%). Advertising banners yield revenue for 34.0% of the respondents in the group admitting monetary gains or benefits.

Who makes contacts?

Which of the following groups contacts you most often?

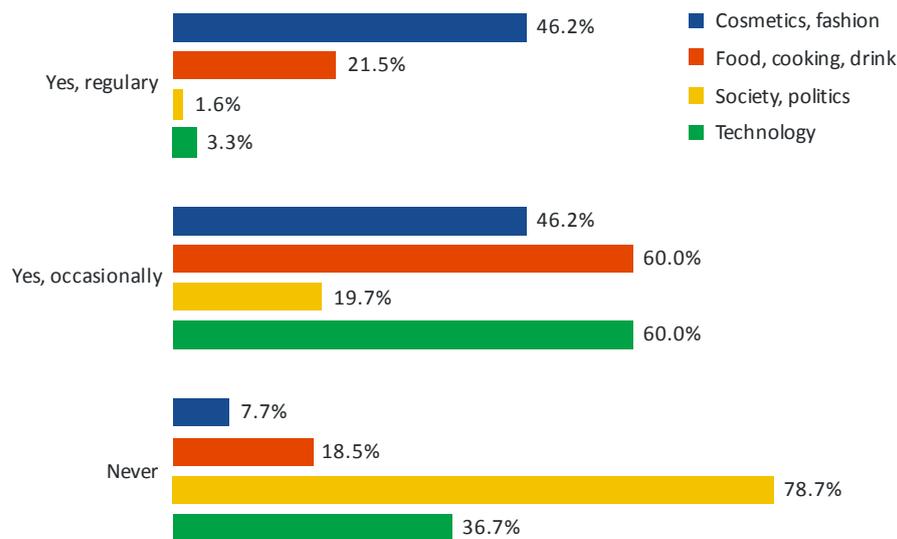
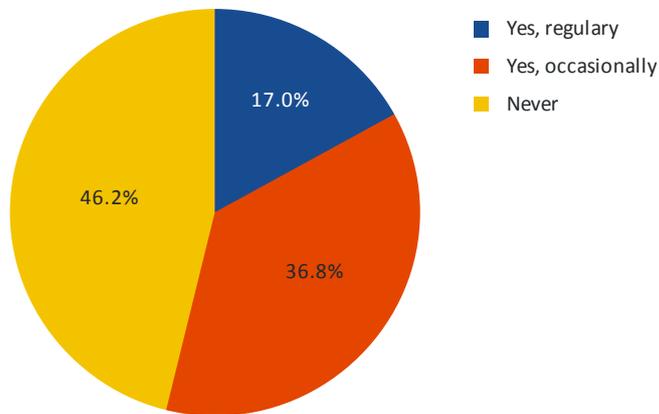


Traditional media have a history of being contacted by various concerned parties about which they report, or they receive ideas about matters they could report on. Our survey shows that politicians and public administration probably do not contact our respondents at all. Most of them (60.7%) are not contacted by firms, activists or journalists, either. It is logical that these are typically blogs with lower visitor rates. The bloggers are most frequently contacted by firms (33.9%) and in some instances activists and citizen initiatives (3.6%) or journalists (1.8%). Most of the firms that do address the respondents do so several times a month or daily (61.8%). Most of the bloggers contacted (80.1%) welcome such contacts with firms. They are most often offered cooperation (90.1%) but also receive press releases just as standard media (36.0%). The following graph shows that firms preferably contact authors writing on cosmetics and fashion or cooking, food and drink.



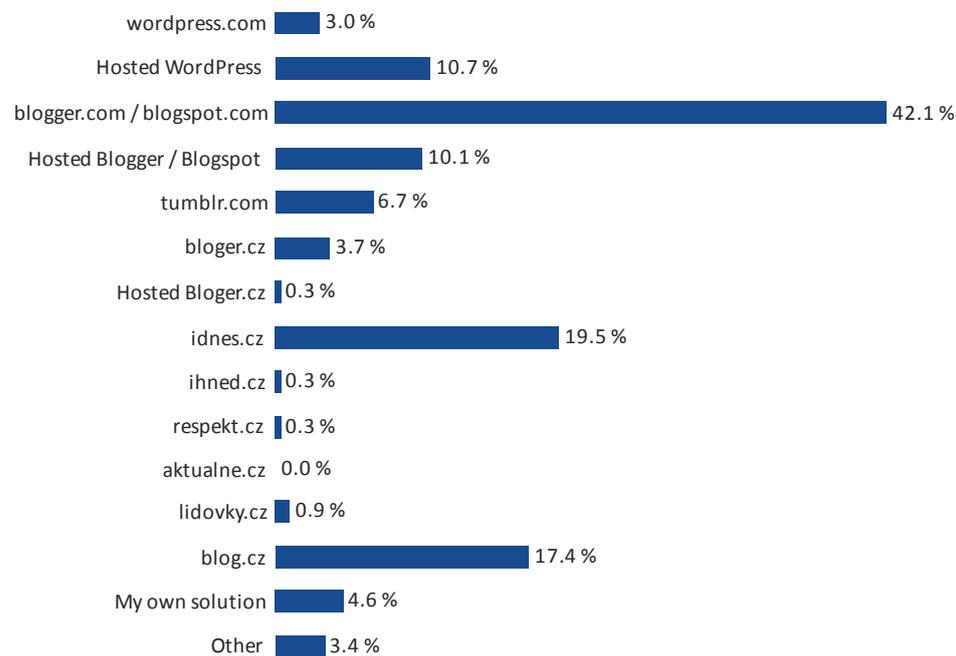
Bloggers and brands

Do you write about brands or branded products?



About one-sixth of the respondents (17.0%) write about brands regularly. It is probably no surprise that almost all of the blogs on cosmetics and fashion (92.3%) and a large majority of blogs on cooking, food and drink (81.5%) pay attention to brands. The authors write most often about their favorite brands (67.8%), day-to-day customer experience (51.4%) and novelties (42.4%).

The platform I blog on



Czech bloggers who joined the survey prefer global platforms. The authors of technologically focused blogs use their own solutions more keenly than others. The strong standing of bloggers on iDnes.cz is the result of notification of the survey by the blog administrator.

About the authors



Donath Business & Media

The company has been active in the areas of public relations and public affairs in the Czech Republic and Slovakia since 1991. For more information, see www.dbm.cz.



MR. Think

Consultancy agency MR. Think (Market Research Think) was established in 2003. It offers comprehensive specialized independent consultancy market research and marketing. For more information, see www.mrthink.cz

Barbora Šimerová, International Organization for Migration (IOM), consultant on the use of social networks

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