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DEMOGRAPHIC DETERMINANTS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION IN A TRANSITION ECONOMY: EVIDENCE FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC*

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Abstract. This scientific paper examines the demographic factors influencing Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) in the Czech Republic, a Central and Eastern European (CEE) transition economy. Understanding who is most inclined toward Start to Business activities is crucial for tailoring effective policy interventions aimed at New Venture Creation and sustained economic growth. The primary scientific goal was to empirically examine the potential connections between the general characteristics of the respondent and their influence on the intention to start a business, thereby identifying the demographic segments most responsive to policy interventions (Age, Gender, Highest Educational Attainment, and Economic Educational Focus). Using the Chi-Squared Test of Independence and Logistic Regression, the empirical analysis revealed a highly significant negative correlation between Age and EI ($p < .001$), confirming the established life-cycle theory: the intention to start a business decline by 1.489% for every one-year increase in age. Conversely, no statistically significant influence was found for Gender ($p = 0.567$), general education level ($p = 0.108$), or specialized Economic Educational Focus ($p = 0.372$). This major anomaly (the failure of formal education to boost EI) suggests structural inefficiencies within the Czech entrepreneurship education system, implying that educational institutions are not successfully transferring the practical skills required to increase Perceived Behavioral Control. This suggests the ecosystem's significant reliance on latent factors, such as the high prevalence of a family entrepreneurial background (58.12%), which likely serves as a crucial compensatory mechanism for weak institutional inputs. Policy recommendations advocate for age-segmented support and a systemic overhaul of economic education curricula.

Keywords: Small and medium-sized enterprises; Entrepreneurial Intention; Business Environment

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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is generally considered to be the driving force of a market economy. In order to develop entrepreneurship, it is important to create suitable conditions for the business sector. At the same time, it is necessary to create opportunities for motivation and easy entry of citizens into entrepreneurship, both by

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removing administrative or technical barriers, as well as by tools supporting people to accept entrepreneurship as a way of their application in the labor market. The culture of building entrepreneurs and entrepreneurially oriented people is particularly important in the conditions of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, whose economies are still considered to be in transit and where the possibility of free enterprise has been limited for more than 40 years.

Entrepreneurship is today widely recognized as a critical force in economic evolution, serving as a primary source of organizational survival, technological innovation, and sustained economic growth, particularly in the modern knowledge economy (Shi & Wang, 2021). The classic Schumpeterian perspective views the entrepreneur as the 'prophet of innovation,' inextricably linking their creative actions to the core of economic development (Binnui & Cowling, 2016). This role is not merely self-serving but is crucial for injecting new vitality into the national economy, constantly creating and refreshing industrial structures (Wang, Wang & Chen, 2018).

The fundamental goal of this process is new venture creation (or start to business), which is neither accidental nor spontaneous; it requires deliberate planning and intentionality on the part of the individual. Because of the inherent difficulty and high uncertainty associated with launching a new firm, understanding the psychological and demographic antecedents of this effort is vital (Ranga et. al., 2019; Mefi & Asoba, 2025).

2. Theoretical Background of Entrepreneurial Intention and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Entrepreneurial intentions are often defined differently by researchers. Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) is defined as the amount of effort an individual is willing to exert to behave in a specific manner, and it is confirmed in the literature as the strongest predictor of eventual entrepreneurial behavior (Martínez-González et al., 2019).

The analysis of EI relies heavily on two complementary cognitive models: Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Shapero and Sokol's Model of the Entrepreneurial Event (SEE), summarize Ranga et al. (2019).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) posits that intention is a function of three key determinants:

1. **Attitude Towards Behavior (AAB):** The individual's evaluation of the behavior, reflecting whether they perceive starting a business as favorable, valuable, and beneficial (Rakib, et al. 2020). Key motivations include the desire for self-achievement, individual goals, social recognition, and a proactive competition/market focus (Wu & Mao, 2020).
2. **Subjective Norms (SN):** The perceived social pressure or support from key reference groups (e.g., family, peers) regarding the desirability of entrepreneurship (Adam et al., 2021).
3. **Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC):** The individual's self-assessment of their capacity and ability to perform the behavior successfully, often referred to as entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Rakib et al., 2020).

The Model of the Entrepreneurial Event (SEE) similarly emphasizes perceived desirability and perceived feasibility as central drivers of entrepreneurial intent (Iakovleva & Kolvereid, 2009). Intentions are typically initiated by subjective variables (beliefs, social norms, values) which then influence action variables (motivation, self-efficacy, and ultimately, intention), written by Martínez-González et al. (2019). Entrepreneurial intention is shaped not only by individual cognitive factors but also by the surrounding Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, encompassing both institutional support and cultural norms (Aguilar Cruz, 2022).

Based on the available research, we can claim that the business environment, or the overall Entrepreneurial Ecosystem consists of the following three key areas:

- **Institutional Support:** Government policies, as well as the quality of education and training programs, play a pivotal role by influencing entrepreneurial attitudes and providing access to critical resources (Liu & Yao-Ping Peng, 2025). The quality of education and training is specifically hypothesized to affect entrepreneurial motivation positively (Hudáková et al., 2020; Vándor, 2021).
- **Education and Training:** Formal education is expected to enhance EI by building human capital and increasing PBC (Perceived Behavioral Control). However, studies consistently show that if Entrepreneurship Education is "imperfect" or overly theoretical, it may fail to reduce the perceived fear

of failure or increase risk-taking, rendering its impact on entrepreneurial intention minor or even negative (Liu et al., 2022; Deng & Wang, 2023; Manchidi, 2025).

- Cultural Context: Cultural values, such as 'Hierarchy' and 'Mastery', have been empirically shown to increase Entrepreneurial Intention (Xanthopoulou et al., 2025).

General characteristics like age, gender, and education are considered exogenous variables that indirectly modulate these core cognitive constructs of The Theory of Planned Behavior (AAB, SN, PBC). Identifying the demographic profiles most receptive to external intervention is essential for designing effective policies (Wassink, 2020).

3. Research Objectives and Methodology

The Czech Republic provides a unique institutional and socio-economic environment for Entrepreneurial Intention analyzing. As a Central and Eastern European (CEE) economy, its history involves a transition from a planned system, meaning its current ecosystem is shaped by a need to cultivate opportunity-driven, high-tech entrepreneurship. The study specifically addresses the lack of large-sample analyses on fundamental demographic predictors within this CEE context.

The overall scientific objective (goal) of this research article is to empirically examine the potential connections between the general characteristics of the respondent and their influence on the intention to start a business, thereby identifying the demographic segments most responsive to policy interventions.

When elaborating this scientific paper, we used theoretical knowledge and information obtained from available domestic as well as foreign literary sources consisting primarily of secondary information sources. The secondary sources of information were data and knowledge obtained through the study, processing and analysis of scientific and professional publications, as well as available other comparative researches, where we monitor selected indicators of business environment and entrepreneurship intend.

The primary information, which was used when writing the paper, was represented by the questionnaire-based survey conducted throughout the Czech Republic in an effort to scientifically identify the current state of perception of attitudes to business environment and entrepreneurship intend (entry motives and issues), while focusing also on the area of identification of key demographic determinants. Data collection from the implemented questionnaire was carried out through quota sampling, with the quota set for equal geographical representation by region. The distribution itself was carried out electronically and through random sampling. Respondents were addressed in the second half of 2024. The empirical analysis utilized a sample of N=1096 non-entrepreneurial respondents from the Czech Republic (derived from a total sample of N=1284 individuals). The dependent variable, Intention to start a business, was treated as a dichotomous (binary) variable.

The study was structured around one overall scientific objective and four specific research questions (RQ1-RQ4) designed to test the influence of general respondent characteristics on the intention to start a business (see Table 1).

Table 1. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question (RQ)	Null Hypothesis (H0)	Alternative Hypothesis (H1)
RQ 1: Does a connection exist between an individual's highest attained education and the consideration of starting a business?	An individual's highest attained education does not influence their intention to start an entrepreneurial activity.	An individual's highest attained education influences their intention to start an entrepreneurial activity.
RQ 2: Does a connection exist between gender and the consideration of starting a business – do men or women have greater intentions to start a business?	An individual's gender does not influence their intention to start an entrepreneurial activity.	An individual's gender influences their intention to start an entrepreneurial activity.

RQ 3: Do graduates of economic education more frequently consider the idea of starting a business?	The nature of an individual's education does not influence their intention to start an entrepreneurial activity.	The nature of an individual's education influences their intention to start an entrepreneurial activity.
RQ 4: Does a connection exist between age and the consideration of starting a business – do younger age groups more frequently consider the idea of starting a business?	An individual's age does not influence their intention to start an entrepreneurial activity.	An individual's age influences their intention to start an entrepreneurial activity.

Source: own research

To test the hypotheses concerning gender and educational attainment/focus (RQ 1 – RQ 3) – which involve a qualitative nominal dependent variable and qualitative nominal independent variables – the Chi-Squared Test of Independence was employed. This statistical test assesses whether a relationship exists between the two categorical variables.

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^c \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$$

Where:

O_{ij} – Observed Frequency

E_{ij} – Expected Frequency

This statistic asymptotically approaches a χ^2 division with the r-1 degrees of freedom. It is based on the frequency table and tests the null statistical hypothesis stating that the numbers in the individual categories are equal to the expected (theoretical) numbers (Rimarčík, 2007).

To assess the influence of age (RQ 4) – where the independent variable is a quantitative ratio variable and the dependent variable is qualitative nominal – Logistic Regression was utilized. Logistic Regression is a statistical model used to predict the probability of a binary outcome (dichotomous outcome: 0 or 1, Yes or No).

$$\pi(X) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\beta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^k \beta_i X_i)}}$$

Where:

β_0 – Intercept (The predicted log-odds of the outcome when all predictor variables)

β_i – Regression Coefficient (The coefficient estimated for the independent variable)

X_i – Independent Variable – Predictor (The i-th variable used to predict the outcome)

k – Number of Predictors (The total number of independent variables in the model).

This approach was selected to preserve the full informational value of the age variable and precisely quantify its impact on the probability of reporting entrepreneurial intention (Hosmer, Lemeshow & Sturdivant, 2013). In our case, logistic regression models the probability of intention to enter entrepreneurship based on age (see Table 2).

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

Characteristic	Categories	Count (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	463	42.24%
	Female	633	57.76%
Education: Economic Focus	Yes	309	28.19%
	No	787	71.81%
Family Entrepreneurial Background (FEBB)	Yes	637	58.12%
	No	459	41.88%

Source: own research

The sample profile reveals key characteristics: 42.24% male and 57.76% female. Notably, 58.12% of respondents reported having a family entrepreneurial background (FEBB), and 28.19% reported having an economic-focused educational background.

4. Results and Discussion

The first part of analysis was oriented on Analysis of Categorical Variables (Chi-Squared Tests) – RQ 1 – RQ 3 (Highest education, Gender and Economic background). The second part analyzed Quantitative Variable (Logistic Regression for Age).

Highest Educational Attainment (RQ 1) and Economic Background (RQ 3) - The Education Paradox: Structural Deficiency in Formal Training

According to Liu et al. (2022), formal education is fundamentally expected to enhance entrepreneurial intentions by providing knowledge (human capital) and increasing perceived capacity (PBC). Economic and business studies are particularly expected to boost EI, as they provide practical details that make entrepreneurship seem more attractive and feasible and often show a positive influence on attraction and capacity (Iakovleva & Kolvereid, 2009). Furthermore, technical or scientific education also often correlates positively with higher EI due to specialized skill sets and inherent risk appetite (Yan, Huang & Xiao, 2023). However, a meta-analytic review confirmed that the link between business education and entrepreneurial intentions is often inconsistent (Zisser et al., 2019).

Table 3. Chi-Squared Tests for Influence of education

	Value	df	p
X ²	10.41	6	.108
N	1.096		

Source: own research

The relationship between the highest completed education level (ranging from basic to PhD) and the intention to start a business was tested. The Chi-Squared Test yielded a value of 10.41 (df=6), with a resulting p-value of 0.108. Since $p > 0.05$, the influence of the highest attained education on entrepreneurial intention could not be statistically demonstrated (see Table 3).

A specific test was conducted to determine if graduates with an economic focus display a higher intent to enter entrepreneurship. The Chi-Squared Test resulted in a value of 0.796 (df=1) and a p-value of 0.372 (see Table 4). As with the other categorical variables, this result led to the conclusion that absolvents of economic education do not demonstrate a statistically significant greater intention for entrepreneurial activity.

Table 4. Chi-Squared Tests for Influence of Economic education

	Value	df	p
X ²	0.796	1	0.372
N	1.096		

Source: own research

The non-significant influence of education—particularly the failure of economic-focused studies to enhance EI (p-value = 0.372) – represents a major anomaly in the context of international literature, which often confirms a positive link between business education and increased capacity and attraction (Liu et al., 2022).

This contradiction supports the hypothesis that the Czech Republic's formal Entrepreneurship Education (EE) system suffers from structural inadequacies, aligning with studies that discuss the negligible impact of "imperfect EE" (Deng & Wang, 2023). The implication is that educational institutions, despite being a core pillar of the institutional environment, are effective only at conveying theoretical knowledge but fail to successfully transfer the necessary practical skills and foster the risk tolerance required to increase perceived behavioral control (PBC). The importance of education at every age, is also confirmed by Bursová et al. (2024). If formal training cannot differentiate entrepreneurial intent from the general population, it suggests that the

educational mechanism is not functioning as an effective accelerator of human capital formation in this critical domain. This diagnosis is essential: policy resources aimed at education must address pedagogical content and quality, not just access.

Gender (RQ 2): Gender Parity: An Alignment with Modern Trends

To assess whether a gender difference in entrepreneurial intention exists, the Chi-Squared Test produced a value of 0.328 (df=1). The corresponding p-value was 0.567. Given that this value far exceeds the standard 0.05 threshold, the analysis confirms that gender does not have a statistically significant influence on the intention to start a business in the Czech population sample.

The relationship between gender and EI is subject to ongoing debate. While some models and early studies hypothesize a greater inclination among young males (Vasilescu, Crivoi & Munteanu, 2025), contemporary research often shows a shift toward parity in intent. Studies have found no significant gender differences in overall levels of entrepreneurial intention or across the three key TPB factors (AAB, SN, PBC), (Contreras-Barraza et al., 2021). Where differences persist, they often stem from socio-cultural perceptions or internalized beliefs about the entrepreneurial role, such as the perception that entrepreneurship aligns more closely with a "masculine" personality style (Deng & Wang, 2023).

The observed lack of significant gender difference in EI ($p=0.567$) in our research aligns with the findings of regional studies, including those within the European context, which suggest a growing convergence toward parity in intent (Contreras-Barraza et al., 2021). This outcome suggests that in the Czech Republic, the pre-behavioral barriers related to perceived social pressure (Subjective Norms) or internalized capability (PBC) are not significantly higher for women than for men. This parity indicates a healthy socio-cultural environment where, unlike some contexts where women may internalize a bias against the "masculine" entrepreneurial identity (Zisser et al., 2019), general intent is balanced. Policy focus should therefore not be primarily aimed at addressing a gender gap in initial desire, but rather at ensuring gender parity in access to resources required for the actual venture launch phase.

Age (RQ 4) – Quantitative Variable (Logistic Regression for Age)

Age was analyzed using logistic regression, allowing for the precise quantification of its impact on the probability of reporting entrepreneurial intention. The model confirmed a highly statistically significant effect for the age variable ($z = -3.521$), with a p-value of <0.001 (see Table 5).

Table 5. Model Summary Logistic Regression for Age

Model	Deviance	AIC	BIC	df	X ²	p
H ₀	1.513	1.515	1.520	1.095		
H ₁	1.500	1,504	1.514	1.094	12.58	< .001
<i>Coefficients</i>						
	Estimate	Standard Error	z	p		
(Intercept)	0.479	0.190	2.518	.012		
vek	-0.015	0.004	-3.521	< .001		

Source: own research

The influence of age on entrepreneurship is often viewed through a life-cycle perspective, mediated by accumulated human capital, self-efficacy, and Future Time Perspective (FTP). Younger cohorts are generally more inclined toward the initial transformation stage—opportunity identification—due to greater risk-willingness and an extended FTP (Zhang, Stough & Gerlowski, 2022). Empirical studies consistently support that age affects entrepreneurial intention, frequently showing a negative correlation, particularly among younger adult samples. The confirmed, and highly quantified, negative relationship between age and entrepreneurial intention in the CR sample robustly confirms the life-cycle perspective established in global literature (Wang, et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2005, Martínez-González, et al., 2019).

The quantitative measure of decline (1.489% per year) confirms that the intrinsic entrepreneurial impulse toward starting a business, driven by high future time perspective and risk willingness, peaks early and occurs early in the working life. Table 6 synthesizes the results, clearly identifying age as the critical factor affecting entrepreneurial intention in the Czech Republic, while rejecting the influence of gender and educational characteristics.

Table 6. Summary of Empirical Results (CR Data): Impact of Demographics on Entrepreneurial Intention

Independent Variable	Statistical Test Used	Test Statistic / z-value	p-value	Effect Direction / Odds Ratio (OR)	Statistical Significance ($\alpha=0.05$)
Highest Education	Chi-Squared Test	10.41 (df=6)	0.108	Not Proven	Non-Significant
Gender	Chi-Squared Test	0.328 (df=1)	0.567	Not Proven	Non-Significant
Economic Focus	Chi-Squared Test	0.796 (df=1)	0.372	Not Proven	Non-Significant
Age	Logistic Regression	$z = -3.521$	<0.001	Negative (OR = 0.98511)	Highly Significant

Source: own research

The empirical results from the Czech Republic provide a complex picture, highlighting both convergences with, and critical deviations from, international entrepreneurial theory, necessitating a careful discussion of institutional and latent factors.

This finding carries significant implications for national strategy. The statistical strength of this factor confirms that policies intended to stimulate nascent entrepreneurship should be heavily focused on young adults, as they are most receptive to identifying new opportunities and converting this desire into intent (Wang et al., 2018). The sharp decline in intent over the lifespan suggests that efforts to encourage entrepreneurship among older cohorts must shift focus—away from generating novel intent and toward leveraging their accumulated capital for venture evaluation, acquisition, or expansion, recognizing their declining intrinsic motivation for high-risk creation.

The Undeniable Influence of Latent Variables: Family Entrepreneurial Background and International Exposure

The high incidence of Family Entrepreneurial Background among the surveyed population (58.12%) provides a critical contextual layer.

International evidence dictates that this factor is a powerful positive predictor of EI, often providing essential role modeling, tacit knowledge transfer, and access to capital that formal schooling lacks (Lindquist, Sol & Van Praag, 2015).

Considering the demonstrated weakness of the formal educational system and economic background (previous sections), the high prevalence of Family Entrepreneurial Background likely acts as a crucial compensatory mechanism in the Czech entrepreneurial ecosystem. The informal acquisition of human capital and social validation through family role models sustains a baseline level of entrepreneurial desirability and feasibility that would otherwise be severely depressed by the perceived inadequacy of formal training. This observation suggests that latent factors—those not explicitly tested as independent variables—may be overriding the effects of poor institutional inputs.

Similarly, while not explicitly measured against EI in the CR data, international experience is globally recognized for fostering human and financial capital (Wassink, 2020). This exposure, often associated with elevated risk tolerance and a greater need for achievement (Vandor, 2021), likely contributes significantly to the latent pool of entrepreneurial motivation, offering another channel for human capital accumulation beyond the domestic educational system.

Conclusions

The empirical investigation into demographic determinants of entrepreneurial intention in the Czech Republic revealed a singular, dominant influence: age, which negatively impacts EI with a quantified decline of 1.489% per year. Conversely, gender and educational attainment, including specialized economic education, demonstrated no statistically significant link to intention.

Our research study validates the universal life-cycle theory of entrepreneurial motivation within a CEE transition economy. The non-significance of education highlights a structural failing in the institutional mechanisms designed to cultivate entrepreneurial capital. This implies that the Czech ecosystem relies heavily on informal, latent factors—such as Family Entrepreneurial Background – to compensate for the inadequate transfer of practical skills and confidence from formal educational channels.

Based on the confirmed relationships and identified structural anomalies, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

1. *Implement Age-Segmented Support.* Given the rapid decline in intention after young adulthood, resource prioritization must focus on targeted support for individuals in the early stages of their career, matching their high-risk appetite. Furthermore, dedicated programs should assist older, capital-rich cohorts in leveraging their experience for stable ventures, such as acquiring or scaling existing small businesses, rather than focusing on novel startup creation.
2. *Overhaul Entrepreneurship Education (EE) Curricula.* The null effect of economic education requires a systemic review of pedagogical methods. Kondrla et al. (2023) claim, the starting point is a reflection on the philosophical background of education as a repetition and production of the same. We should learn from examples of best practice, identify successful strategies that can be adapted or replicated in their own conditions (Kučera et al., 2024). EE programs must transition from theoretical instruction to applied, experiential learning, mandatory practical mentorship, and venture simulation exercises. The objective is to genuinely improve Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) and risk management capabilities.
3. *Formalize and Leverage Family Entrepreneurial Background (FEBB).* Policymakers should recognize FEBB as a powerful, latent propeller of EI to formalize the tacit knowledge and skills transferred informally, thereby maximizing this robust intergenerational capital.
4. *Incentivize Return-Migrant Entrepreneurship.* The positive correlation between international mobility and entrepreneurial propensity suggests that specific initiatives should be developed to attract Czech citizens who have acquired extensive work experience abroad. By offering fast-track support and capital access, the nation can capitalize on the elevated human and financial capital, and higher risk tolerance, brought back by these returnees.

A limitation of this research is its reliance on general demographics, which serve as proxies rather than direct measures of the core cognitive drivers (AAB, SN, PBC). Furthermore, targeted qualitative studies are necessary to specifically diagnose the content and quality failures within the Czech educational system to determine the precise barriers preventing successful skill transfer and the cultivation of entrepreneurial conviction.

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