



## Weekly Briefing

### **Poland social briefing:**

**Least births in Poland since 1945, population below 38 million**

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## **Least births in Poland since 1945, population below 38 million**

### **Summary**

*The Polish Central Statistical Office has published the results of the National Census<sup>i</sup> and National Family Census<sup>ii</sup>. The results show that Poland's population will fall below 38 million by the end of 2022, with the lowest birth rate since the end of the Second World War in 1945. The number of families, marriages is also falling significantly. The number of single-person households, couples who do not have children and women not planning to have children is increasing.*

### **Introduction**

Poland's population decreased by 141,000 in 2022 compared to the previous year. The population loss was smaller than in 2021, but still larger than before the outbreak of the pandemic, Poland's Central Statistical Office (CSO) president Dominik Rozkrut told a conference.<sup>iii</sup> He added that 2022 recorded the fewest births in the post-war period. He also reported that the population of Poland at the end of 2022 was 37,767,000 people. The decline in Poland's population has continued uninterrupted since 2012, and the increase in mortality caused by the pandemic has clearly compounded the negative demographic trends.

### **Less and less families, more single-person households**

"It is estimated that for every 10,000 people in the population in 2022, 37 people were lost, compared to 47 in 2021 - recall, this was a pandemic. By comparison, the last year before the pandemic saw a loss of 7 people." - informed the CSO president. He added that the population change is mainly influenced by the birth rate, which has remained negative since 2012. "In 2022, we recorded the fewest births in the post-war period. We estimate that the number of births was 305,000, 27,000 fewer than last year. The number of deaths was 448,000, also 72,000 lower than the previous year." - he said. According to the CSO, the number of births was lower than the number of deaths by 143,000. "The natural increase rate was minus 3.8 against minus 4.9 in the previous year and 0.9 in 2019," - he pointed out.

According to the CSO, the number of single-person households in Poland is also increasing and the number of families is decreasing.<sup>iv</sup> There are also fewer married couples, more informal unions and couples without children. In urban areas, the percentage of one-person households already reaches 27 per cent (22.7 per cent overall). During the last census, this percentage was around 23 per cent (20 per cent overall). The number of households with four persons and more is falling. The number of families in the community is also falling dramatically. In 2011, there were 7.4 per cent more families than there are now (814,000 more than there were a decade ago). According to the data, at the end of March 2021, the number of families in Poland exceeded 10 million. The number of families in cities has decreased, while the number of families in villages has increased slightly, which the CSO explains by internal migration - moving from cities to suburban areas.

The data also show that children in Poland are mainly in married couples - they account for 41.8 per cent of all families.<sup>v</sup> Unmarried couples with children make up just 2.8 per cent of families. This is not much, but one can see a change since the last census 10 years ago. At that time, families with children accounted for almost 50 per cent and the number of informal couples who decided to have a child was 1.6 per cent. Thus, the number of families with children has decreased by 22.3 per cent over the decade. The trend is downward in both urban and rural areas. In Poland, as the research indicates, not getting married, which is often postponed for financial reasons, is holding back fertility decisions.

However, a dynamic increase was observed in the number of informal unions. In 2021, there were 552.8 thousand such unions, compared to 316.5 thousand in 2011. Dynamic growth can also be seen in the number of married couples who choose not to have children. In 2021, there were more than 3 million of them, more than 300 000 more than a decade ago.

The percentage of single parents has been similar for years: in 2011, the percentage of mothers raising children alone was 19.8 per cent, 10 years later it was 18.8 per cent of all families. With fathers, on the other hand, this percentage is still very low, although it has increased - from 3 per cent to almost 4 per cent.

### **Almost 70% of Polish women do not plan to have children**

Nor is the rise in fertility rates helped by women's lack of desire to have children. More and more Polish women are postponing motherhood. This is confirmed by a recent study by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS), which shows that only 32 per cent of women aged 18-45 plan to have children in the near or long term, while 68 per cent have no such plans <sup>vi</sup>.

Compared to 2017, when CBOS conducted the previous such survey, the percentage of women aged 18-45 planning to have offspring dropped by 9 percentage points (at that time, 41 per cent of respondents planned to have offspring in the longer or shorter term). The percentage declaring procreation intentions in a 3-4 year perspective decreased by 8 percentage points (at that time, 25 per cent of women had such plans). "This decline can be partly explained by the demographic changes that have taken place in this period. Compared to 2017, in the analysed group, the percentage of younger women, up to the age of 34, has relatively decreased, while the percentage of older women, aged 35-39, and above all those aged 40-45, has increased," - notes CBOS in its analysis of the survey results. Economic issues and social changes are also important.

### **100,000 fewer people of working age each year**

Analysts underline that in the coming years, there will be a decrease in the number of people in work and no one to replace them. This gap will amount to an average of around 100,000 workers each year, they stress. The consequences may be seen, for example, in the pension and tax system. The dependency ratio is expected to be one of the highest among OECD countries. According to OECD forecasts, by 2075, Poland's dependency ratio will be one of the highest in the entire Organization (e.g. after South Korea, Portugal, Japan or Greece).<sup>vii</sup> Demographic crisis also means, among other things, stronger wage pressures and low unemployment, but also increasing tension in the pension system and the threat of tax increases. The CSO warns that no significant changes guaranteeing stable demographic development can be expected in the near future. Economists believe that in order to counteract the negative consequences, it may be crucial to encourage longer working lives and to adapt the labour market to the needs of the elderly.

"At the end of 2022, there were 22.2 million people of working age (220,000 fewer than a year ago), who accounted for around 58.7 per cent of the total population (compared to 59.1 per cent in 2021, 64.4 per cent in 2010 and 60.8 per cent in 2000)." - reports the CSO. The same study shows that for years there has been a continuous increase in the number and percentage of people of post-working age. This is now more than 8.6 million people, and the share of this group in the population has increased to 22.8 per cent (from 22.5 per cent in 2021, 16.8 per cent in 2010 and 14.8 per cent in 2000).

"The observed demographic processes indicate that Poland's population situation remains difficult. No significant changes guaranteeing stable demographic development can be expected

in the near future. The low fertility rate, observed for more than a quarter of a century, will also have a negative impact on the future number of births, due to the decreasing number of women of childbearing age". - reads the CSO report. This phenomenon is further exacerbated by the continuing high level of emigration of Poles abroad for a number of years.

Experts stress that at the current stage of Poland's demographic development, it seems impossible to achieve increased population levels without mass immigration, exceeding the scale of the inflow of Ukrainian citizens. They note, however, that such strong migration inflows would be a significant challenge to social balance. They assess that in order to continue Poland's further economic development, it is currently necessary to increase the quality of both demographic and social capitals (better health care, education, science).<sup>viii</sup>

## Conclusion

Poland is facing a significant demographic crisis and a falling birth rate. Forecasts show that it may be in the infamous lead of OECD countries in this area in the future. The number of families and marriages is also falling, while the number of one-person households is increasing. Demographic problems will force changes in pension and tax policy, as well as migration policy. The improvement of Poland's demographic indicators may be facilitated by the inflow of Ukrainian immigration, which will decide to stay in Poland in the future.

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i The Central Statistical Office <https://stat.gov.pl/en/national-census/national-population-and-housing-census-2021/national-population-and-housing-census-2021/preliminary-results-of-the-national-population-and-housing-census-2021,1,1.html>

ii The Central Statistical Office <https://stat.gov.pl/aktualnosci/udostepnilismy-informacje-sygnalna-rodziny-wyniki-wstepne-nsp-2021-473,1.html>

iii Ibidem

iv The Central Statistical Office <https://stat.gov.pl/spisy-powszechne/nsp-2021/nsp-2021-wyniki-wstepne/rodziny-wyniki-wstepne-nsp-2021,9,1.html>

v [Forsal.pl Economic Portal https://forsal.pl/gospodarka/demografia/artykuly/8649679,demografia-polski-liczba-urodzen-dlaczego-populacja-sie-kurczy.html](https://forsal.pl/gospodarka/demografia/artykuly/8649679,demografia-polski-liczba-urodzen-dlaczego-populacja-sie-kurczy.html)

vi [Onet.pl Portal https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/druzgocace-dane-gus-tak-zle-nie-bylo-od-czasu-ii-wojny-swiatowej/tnvkpwd](https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/druzgocace-dane-gus-tak-zle-nie-bylo-od-czasu-ii-wojny-swiatowej/tnvkpwd)

vii [BusinessInsider.com.pl Economic Portal https://businessinsider.com.pl/gospodarka/mroczne-prognozy-dla-polski-co-roku-bedzie-znikac-100-tys-pracownikow/00v9t94](https://businessinsider.com.pl/gospodarka/mroczne-prognozy-dla-polski-co-roku-bedzie-znikac-100-tys-pracownikow/00v9t94)

viii Ibidem