

# Chapter III

## Poland's population and demographic changes

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Demographic change over the transition period has been characterized by great dynamism. Polish demographers differ in their definitions of this dynamic in relation to past trends in other European countries. However, this does not change the facts. For the high pace of population change came as a surprise and its consequences for the social development of Poland have not been fully sensed. The lack of such awareness may translate into inappropriate decisions concerning social policy. This is why in recent years the Government Population Commission and other expert committees have addressed the social consequences that may – and indeed already do – result from the population change. The present *Social Report* also takes this essential issue into account.

In the present chapter you will find a comprehensive overview of the main directions of demographic change in Poland over the last 15 years, including changes in the family model. The main trend that raises fears is that of the sharp decline in the fertility rate – which today is below the replacement level for the current population. Thus, the question about a social policy that could counteract this unfavourable trend looms as especially relevant. However, raising such a question does not mean that this chapter, as is the case with the others in this *Report*, will be devoted to finding an answer. Rather, chapter three aims at explaining this tendency and at examining the factors which have contributed to it. Both the development of a market economy and modernization are accompanied by individualization, a decreasing propensity to marry and declining fertility. Can this trend be changed, and if so, how?

## 1. The population of Poland at the threshold of the transformation, and at the beginning of the 21st century. Size and structure

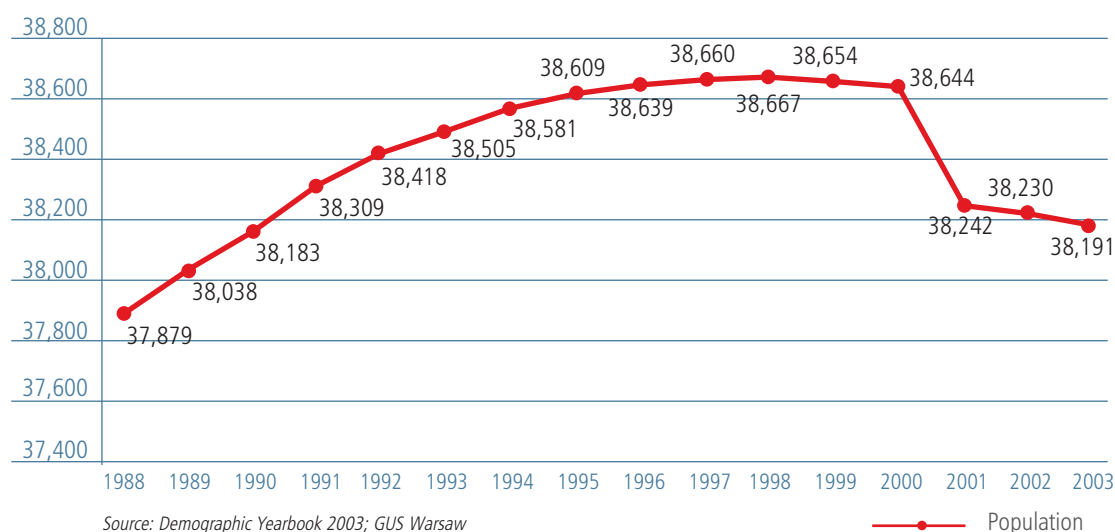
Until the 1990s Poland was characterized by a high dynamism in demographic processes. Between 1946 and 1988 Poland's population grew by around 14 million (from 23.9 to 37.9 million), i.e., by 59%. Average annual population growth amounted to 339,200. Between 1988 and 2002 (the dates of subsequent National Population Censuses) the population grew from 37,879,100 to 38,230,100, that is, by 351,000. Therefore, during the 14 years of the transformation period the size of the population increased by an amount equal to the annual average population growth across four decades before 1990.

The decline in the size of the population of Poland, which began in 1999, is still continuing. It results from the negative natural increase and the negative balance of foreign migration. The balance of migration was negative during the whole period embraced by the censuses, which means that more Poles left the country to live elsewhere than returned or settled in Poland. The balance of migration fluctuated between -11,000 (in 1997) and almost -20,000 (in 2000). In 2002 it amounted to -17,900.

Demographic processes connected with the natural movement of the population (such as marriages, births, deaths and migrations) influenced the changes in the size and structure of the population of Poland by age group.

The fundamental changes in the population structure are related to the changes in socio-economic conditions. On the one hand, the educational level of society has increased. On the other hand, the structure of the population and of households by socio-economic groups has changed due to ownership transformations and the situation on the labour market.

Figure 1. The changes in population size between 1988 and 2003 (in thousands)

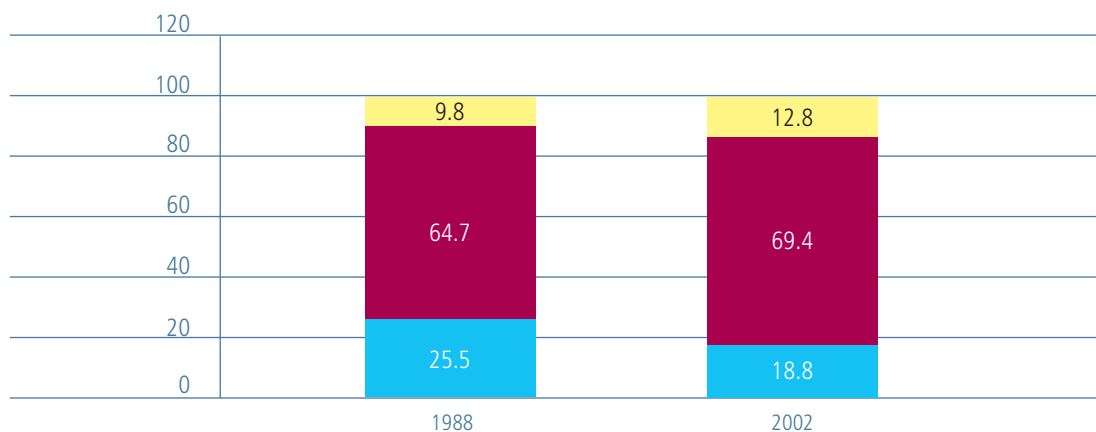


## The population of Poland by age group

The size and the structure of the population by age group changed due to a decline in the birth rate and an increase in life expectancy.

The number of children aged 0-14 decreased from 9,672,800 in 1988 to 6,804,200 in 2002, i.e., by 2,868,600 (almost 30%). The number of people aged 15-64 increased by 2,019,200, while the number of the elderly people (aged over 65) grew by 1,183,200. The population structure by age group has also changed (figure 2).

Figure 2. Population by age group in 1988 and 2002 (%)

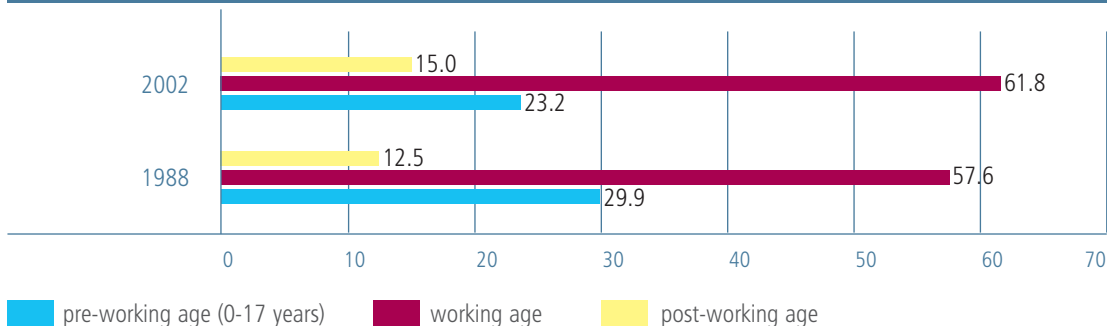


Source: Report by the Government Population Council 2004.

0-14 15-64 65 and more

The number of people in the pre-working age group (the youngest generation) decreased. The number of people in the working age group increased by 1,822,000, mainly due to the rise in the number of people aged 45 and more (by 1,748,500).

Figure 3. The population structure by age group in 1988 and 2002



pre-working age (0-17 years) working age post-working age

## The general level of education

Education has become the main determinant on the labour market. The educational aspirations of society as well as their fulfillment have increased. As a result, the number of persons who have completed secondary education increased by over 5.5 million, while the number of persons who have completed higher education grew 1.5-fold (see Table 1).

Women have shown particular educational activity. The percentage of women who have completed higher education is currently higher than in the case of men (compare Table 1).

Table 1. Population aged 15 or more by sex and level of educational attainment in 1988 and 2002

Level of education	1988		2002		1988 = 100	Men		Women	
	thous.	%	thous.	%		1988	2002	1988	2002
Total	28 269.1	100.0	31 288.4	100.0	110.7	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
including:									
Higher	1 838.3	6.5	3 203.6	10.2	174.3	7.2	9.7	5.9	10.8
High school and post-high school	6 979.6	24.7	10 298.4	32.6	146.3	20.6	28.7	28.4	36.3
Basic vocational	6 665.8	23.6	7 539.8	24.1	113.1	31.5	31.3	16.2	17.5
Elementary complete	10 961.4	38.8	8 823.3	28.2	80.4	35.9	26.2	41.5	29.9
Elementary incomplete and no school education	1 823.7	6.7	876.1	2.8	x	4.5	1.7	7.5	3.8

Source: GUS 2003a

## The population of Poland by socio-economic group

The changes in the age structure of the population, but above all in the situation on the labour market, have transformed the structure of the population in accord with the main sources of income. The number of persons supporting themselves from their salary incomes, especially that of the self-employed, has significantly decreased, while the percentage of the population whose primary source of income

was from non-earned sources (e.g., disability allowances, pensions, social benefits, etc.) increased, as did the number of persons supported by others (see table 2).

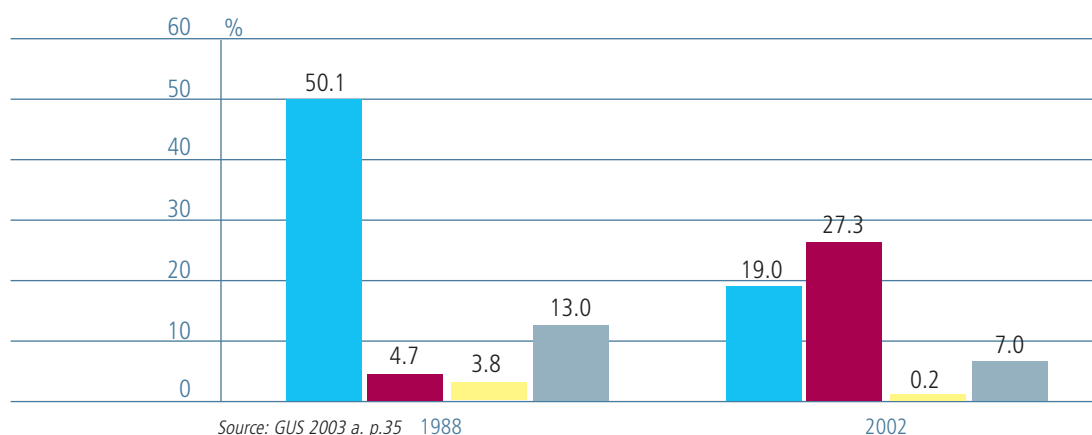
Table 2. Population by the main source of income in 1988 and 2002.

Source of income	1988		2002		1988=100
	thousands	%	thousands	%	
Total	37 879.1	100.0	38 230.1	100.0	100.9
With own source of income	24 024.7	63.4	23 073.3	60.4	96.5
Dependent	13 853.9	36.6	13 547.2	38.0	105.0
Salary income	29 832.0	78.8	23 412.7	61.2	78.5
– with own source of income	17 218.2	45.5	12 354.7	32.3	71.8
– dependent	12 613.8	33.3	11 058.2	28.9	87.7
Non-earned income	8 047.1	21.2	14 163.7	37.0	176.0
– with own source of income	6 806.8	18.0	10 691.7	28.0	157.1
– dependent	1 240.3	3.0	3 472.0	9.1	279.0
Income from property	x	x	44.1	0.1	x
– with own source of income	x	x	27.1	0.1	x
– dependent	x	x	17.0	0.0	x
Unspecified source of income	x	x	609.5	1.6	x

Source: GUS 2003

The ownership transformations which took place in the Polish economy during the transformation period were reflected in the structure of the sources of salary income. The importance of employment in the public sector decreased in favour of the private sector. This concerned sectors outside agriculture. As compared to 1988, the percentage of the population maintaining themselves from agriculture systematically decreased (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Those with their own source of salary income in 1988 and 2002.



- Employment in the public sector apart from agriculture
- Employment in the private sector apart from agriculture
- Employment in agriculture in the public sector
- Employment in agriculture in the private sector

In 2002 early retirement allowances and pensions were the most common source of income apart from salaries. In comparison with 1988, the percentage of people maintaining themselves from those benefits increased by 63% (in the case of early retirement allowance) and 22% (in the case of pensions). The group of persons for whom social benefits constituted the main source of income underwent a seven-fold increase. Unemployment benefits constituted the primary source of income for 5.7% of the population (GUS, 2003a p.36).

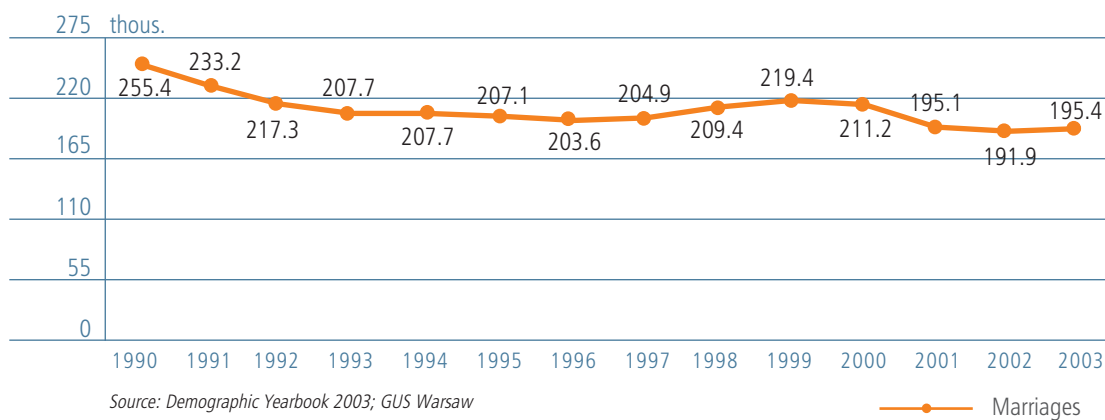
## 2. Demographic processes in Poland. Their determinants and consequences.

### Demographic change in the family model

#### Family formation patterns

Marriage and family have been, and still are highly ranked in the hierarchy of values for the generations entering adult life (CBOS 1994, 1998, Świda-Ziemba 2000, Ignatczak 2002). However, the values declared do not fully translate into pro-marriage activities. Since the beginning of the 1990s the number of marriages contracted has been clearly declining (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. The changes in the number of marriages contracted between 1990 and 2002 (in thousands)





The propensity to marry (expressed as the number of marriages per 1,000 persons of a given sex and in a given age group) is decreasing.

Marriage patterns are also changing due to the postponement of matrimonial decisions. Families are being formed by older persons (the largest number of marriages has shifted from the age group 20-24 to the age group 25-29). This may mean that marriages are contracted by more mature and financially independent persons. Nevertheless, this trend has negative consequences for the procreation process as it is connected with the postponement of the birth of the first child. This is one of the key factors that reduce the fertility rate.

The number of non-formalized (partnership) unions points to a shift in attitudes towards marriage. Statistical data show that the percentage of such unions is insignificant in comparison with marriages (in 1988 it amounted to 1.2% and in 2002 to 1.9%). This may result from a reluctance to reveal such unions. Moreover, the National Population Censuses (from which the above data were taken) record the situation at the moment the survey is conducted. On this basis one cannot conclude whether the persons surveyed had lived in informal unions in the past. However, the approval of this form of cohabitation is gradually increasing. 47% of respondents consider it to be appropriate provided that it is accepted by both partners (Frątczak 2003).

At the same time the propensity to remain single continues to increase. This is reflected in the changes in the first marriage rate. In 1990 87% of men and 90% of women below age 50 had entered into their first marriage. In 2001 those figures amounted to 57.6% and 58.1% respectively.

Delayed entry into marriage results from the social and economic transformations that have been taking place in Poland. To establish a family one needs to have a profession and a job. This is preceded by an extended period of schooling and studying. The 1990s brought about an educational revolution, which is expressed by the increased numbers of people entering secondary and higher education. The extended period of

schooling and studying is usually accompanied by the postponement of matrimonial plans. Women, to an even greater extent than men, aim at attaining education and professional qualifications first, followed by finding a job and only then want to form a family.

The postponement of marriage plans is also a result of the difficult living conditions of some young people. Unemployment, the widening sphere of poverty and high prices of housing, negatively influence pro-marriage attitudes.

The reasons behind the shifting attitudes of young people towards marriage may also be found in cultural and social change. The ideals of individualism, autonomy and self-fulfillment in other than traditional forms are spreading. The access to information technologies and the opportunity to directly observe patterns present in Western countries have resulted in the liberalization of attitudes and sexual behaviour, in seeking independence and a greater acceptance for non-formalized unions.

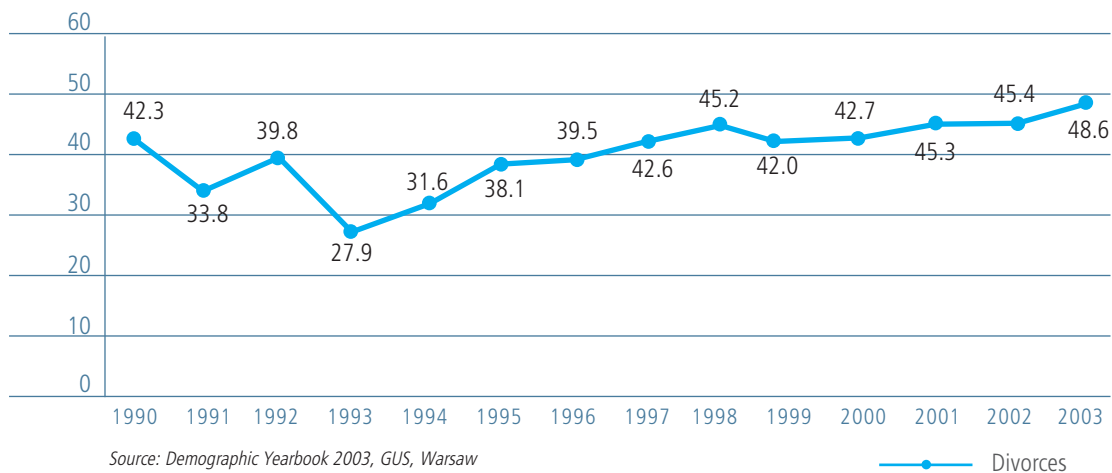
#### Are current demographic tendencies a threat to the modern family?

Marriage is still the predominant form of family formation in Poland (the number of informal unions is small, even if we question the data from the National Population Census in 2002, which indicate that they account for 1.2% of all unions. Z.J. Holzer arrived at a figure of 4.7% (1997). Rather it is the breakdown of the family (with children) that constitutes the main problem for family policy.

The death of one of the spouses, usually the man, is a natural cause of the end of a marriage. The number of marriages terminated due to the death of the husband is almost three times higher than the number of marriages terminated due to the death of a wife. This is a result of the inordinate mortality of men, especially in middle-age groups.

The increasing number of divorces recorded recently has resulted in the growing number of single-parent families (see Figure 6). Informal unions (as the experience of the countries with a

Figure 6. The number of divorces between 1990 and 2002 (in thousands)



large number of such arrangements proves) are usually characterized by low stability.

#### Changes in the fertility rate

The 1990s and the first years of the 21st century have been characterized by a decline in the number of births. Together with insignificant changes in the death rate, such a sharp decline in the birth rate has resulted in a negative natural increase rate which in 2002 amounted to -5,700 and in 2003 already to -14,500 people.

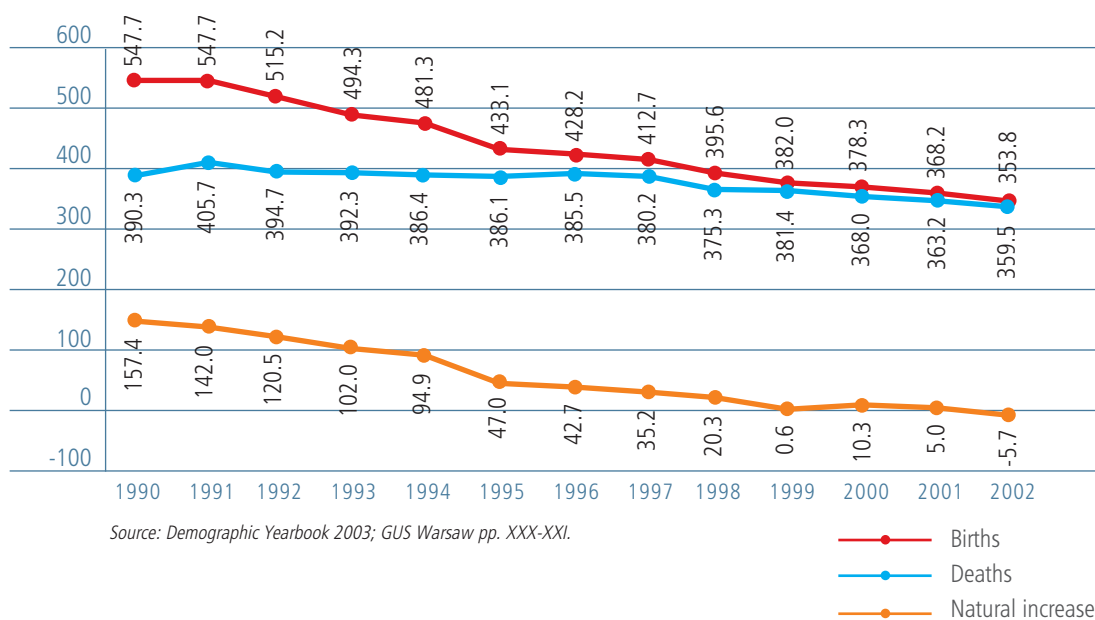
This is partly caused by the decreasing number of women of childbearing age, but the main reason is the change in the female fertility model. Female fertility has decreased in almost all age groups. As a consequence, the fertility rate (the average number of children born by women aged 15-49) declined from 2.04 in 1990 to 1.22 in 2003. These profound changes concern both urban areas (where the fertility rate decreased from 1.8 in 1990 to 1.1 in 2003) and rural areas (from 2.5 to 1.4 respectively), which earlier had been the setting of the traditional family model with a large average

number of children. At the same time, the systematic, though slow, growth of the average age of women giving birth to a child has been observed. In 1990 it was 26.3, while in 2003 it was 27.3 years.

Another characteristic of the transformations is the increase of extra-marital births. In 1990 33,700 children were born out of wedlock, which accounted for 6.7% of the total number of births. In 2003 these figures amounted to 55,900 and 15.8% respectively.

This fertility model is to a greater extent moving away from the model which ensures the simple replacement of the generations. Demographers consider this level for the fertility rate to be very low. The reproduction rate, which amounted to 0.99 in 1990 fell to 0.60 in 2002. Natural increase, though it had been gradually declining in the 1990s, in 1990 still amounted to 157,000. However, it has been negative since 2002 (- 5,700, - 14,500 in 2003).

Figure 7. Live births, deaths, and natural increase between 1990 and 2002 (in thousands)



### The determinants of the changes

The reasons of the changes in family formation and fertility rate may be due to Poland entering a second demographic transition phase<sup>1</sup>. However, the fast pace of the changes indicates that their directions are also related to the consequences of the socio-economic transformation.

The postponement of childbirth, the decline of fertility among young women, the increase of extra-marital births, these being the result of changes in the family model, constitute the characteristic features of the second demographic transition. However, the factors which influenced such radical changes to the family model and procreation attitudes in Poland may also be sought among the socio-economic determinants of the transformation period (Kotowska 1999, Frątczak 2000).

The situation on the labour market – which is characterized by difficulties in finding a job, unstable employment and

efforts aimed at maintaining a job, unemployment, increasing social inequalities and poverty – does not favour the implementation of procreation plans. Studies show that procreation plans have not undergone radical change. Those who plan to have two children are still the most numerous group. In a 1995 survey some 64.1% of respondents planned to have two children, while 28.8% wanted to have three children. In 2002 those figures amounted to 58% and 23.4% respectively. If the declared plans were fulfilled, there would be 230 children per 100 persons (Kotowska [ed.] 2003) which would guarantee the simple replacement level of the population.

Nevertheless, life alters these plans in minus.

<sup>1</sup> A theory explaining the changes in demographic processes characterized by fertility decline below the simple replacement of the generations and the stabilization of the fertility rate on this level. Permanent fertility decline below the replacement level stems, among other matters, from the changed patterns of family formation and breakdown as well as shifts in the fertility pattern.

Studies from 1995 (GUS 1997) and 2003 show that the realization of respondents' procreation plans was limited by barriers related to the situation on the job market (difficulties in finding a job, fear of losing it), high costs of maintenance and the difficulties in reconciling professional and family duties. For a woman, childbirth means a shorter or longer absence from professional activity or even total professional deactivation. The fear of difficulties connected with the return to professional work strongly influences private life (Balcerzak-Paradowska [ed.] 2003). It should also be taken into account that, for part of the population, resignation from enlarging the family results from axiological choices: attaching greater importance to other values, defying traditional norms of behaviour, acceptance of other than parental social roles and private life patterns. All in all, it may be concluded that attitudes towards marriage and having children are influenced on the one hand by such factors as: the aim to attain a higher education level, prolonged schooling/studying period, desire to achieve a higher standard of living, a larger share of women in education and on the labour market, shifts in the value systems (the plan to have a child is sometimes "trumped" by the aspirations to implement other plans and to attain material goods) with a simultaneous increase of the importance of individualism, personal independence and self-fulfilment in "non-family" life. On the other hand, those attitudes are affected by unemployment, limited accessibility of housing, high costs of maintenance, the threat of poverty and ill-adjusted institutional solutions to the needs of the family.

#### An ageing population

Increasing life expectancy is one of the manifestations of the demographic changes in Poland. Together with a declining fertility rate it brings about an increase of the number and share of elderly people in the population, i.e., the ageing of the Polish population.

In 1990 life expectancy at birth for a man amounted to 66.5 years and in 2002 to 70.4 years; for a woman it was 75.7 years in 1990 and 78.8 years in 2002.

The number and the share of elderly people in Polish society has increased. In 2002 the number of people aged over 60 amounted to 6.48 million (or 17% of the total population), while in 1988 it amounted to 5.5 million, i.e., 14.6%. The percentage of senior citizens (aged 80 and more) in the total population increased from 1.9% in 1988 to 2.2% in 2002.

The longer average life-span of women and high mortality of men in younger age groups explains the growing number of women among the elderly (60.2% of them are women). Over half of the elderly live in family households, but 43% maintain private households.

#### Demographic projections and their consequences

The profound demographic changes occurring in Poland will have consequences for the size and the structure of the population in the future. They will also bear socio-economic consequences, ones which will influence the development of the country and the living conditions of future generations.

The projections prepared in recent years by the Central Statistical Office (GUS) for 2000-2050 and the projections of the United Nations Organization for 2000-2050 point to a progressive decline in the total population.

Changes in the population structure by age group will also take place. The low fertility rate results in a decreasing number and share of children and young people in the population structure. The fertility decline and longer life expectancy will cause the further ageing of the population.

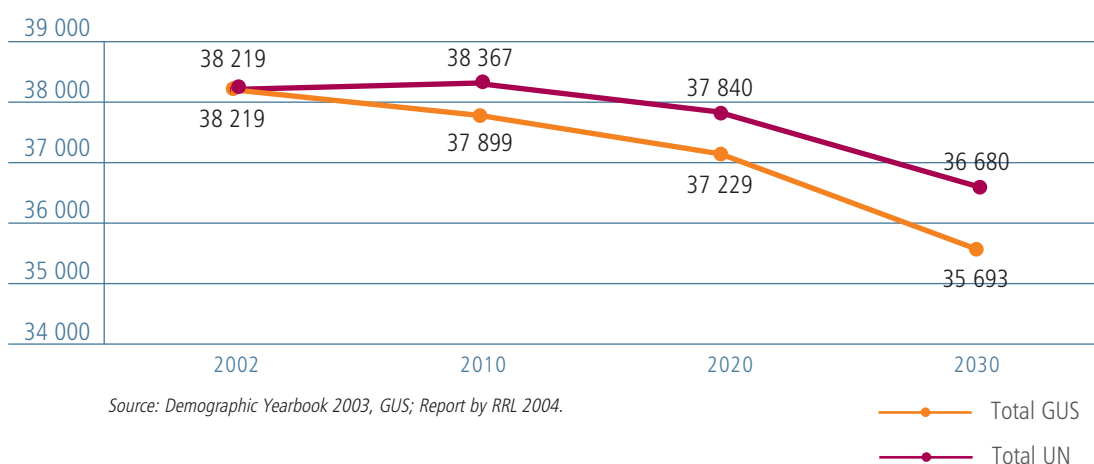
The demographic burden (understood as the share of dependent persons per 100 working persons) will increase. The GUS projection envisages that after 2010 this burden will increase to around 70 non-working persons per each 100 working persons. This will stem mainly from the increased number of people in post-working age<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The UN projection points to similar tendencies. Since another range of pre-working age was used in this projection, the dynamics of the change is lower, and a ratio of 70:100 will be achieved in 2050.

Negative natural increase is also expected to deepen, especially after 2015. In 2020 it may amount to around -75,000 and in 2030 to around -180,000 persons.

Some experts anticipate that, due to the opening of Poland's borders, the increased outflow of people from Poland will considerably exceed the inflow. This process is to continue during the whole projected period (2003-2030). Although the surplus of emigrants over immigrants will eventually decrease, the negative balance of migrations will remain on a level of between 10,000 and 20,000 people a year (Report by RRL 2004).

Figure 8. Poland's population in thousands according to the projections of GUS and the UN



The projected changes will plainly have socio-economic consequences. The smaller size of the young generations will translate into less "pressure" on the education system and later on the labour market. This also means a decrease of the potential of the population with higher qualifications, better health, greater educational, professional and spatial mobility and such characteristics as creativity, productivity, and the propensity to take risk – that is, features which are needed and should be employed for the benefit of the social and economic life of the country.

The ageing of the working population will entail the necessity to implement an appropriate policy with respect to continuous education and encouraging people in the advanced age group and older to continue professional and social activity.

The increasing number of elderly people will result in a growing burden for both the social security system (pension and retirement system, but also the social assistance system), and the health care benefits system. The demand for nursing services will grow as the declining number of persons forming families and limited family ties may considerably reduce the possibility for elderly people to obtain help and care within the family.

### 3. The situation of families

The changes in the number and structure of households and families are a consequence of the shift in matrimonial and procreation attitudes. Households have fewer members, and more often than before have but one person. The model of the family with fewer children is strengthening. It is more often a family with just one child. The number of single parent families is growing. These changes affect the functioning of the family and the conditions for rearing children.

In 2002 the number of households amounted to 13,337,000. This marked a growth of 11.4% in comparison with 1988, when their number totalled 11,970,400. However, the average number of persons per household decreased from 3.1 in 1988 to 2.84 in 2002. This was caused by the decline in the number of children per family and the increase of the percentage of one person households (from 18.3% in 1988 to 24.8% in 2002). These are mainly households established by young people (aged

below 30) who are economically independent and opt to delay their matrimonial decisions.

In 2002 the number of families amounted to 10,457,600, which marks a growth of 2.3% in comparison with 1988. There is a smaller number of families with children (6,323,000 in 1988, 5,860,300 in 2002) and the number of married couples without children has slightly increased (by 40,000). 6,079,400 of the families with children were families with dependent children aged below 24. The number of such families also decreased in comparison with 1988 (from 6,209,900, i.e., by 2.1%).

Families with one child constituted 46.9% (in 1988 40.5%) and with two children 36.2% (in 1988 40.7%) of the total number of families. Therefore, while at the beginning of the 1990s the nuclear family was on average a family with two children, in the first years of the 21st century the model of a family with one child prevails.

The less than lasting character of marriage and the increased number of extra-marital births have brought about a growing number of single-parent families. In 2002 the number of single parent families with dependent children aged below 24 amounted to 1,125,500, i.e., 18.5% of families in this category. In 1988 the number of such families amounted to 901,000, i.e., 14%.

The feminization of single-parent families (90.5% of them headed by single mothers rearing children) is a consequence of the break-up or ending of a family. The first cause is the death of the husband. Thereafter follow divorce or separation, which usually result in the granting of child-custody to the mother. and the final such cause is childbirth by single women.

The fertility drop also resulted in changes in the number and – albeit insignificantly – in the structure of families with many children. In comparison with 1988 the number of such families decreased from 1,166,200 to 1,024,000, and the share in the structure of families with dependent children

aged below 24 decreased from 18.8% to 16.8% respectively). Although the share of the families with a larger number of children (four or more) slightly increased (by 1%), the number of families formed by single mothers with many children grew significantly (by 21,700, i.e., by 27.2%, while the number of single mothers who rear four or more children increased even more – by 35.8%). These changes point to the alarming characteristics of such families, namely, a large number of children and single parenthood, which importantly affect child-rearing and living conditions.

99% of the dependent children aged below 24 (i.e., 10,808,700) are reared in families. One child in three is brought up in a family with many children, while 15% in a single-parent family.

Table 3. Children and young people by age group in 1988, 2002 and 2003 (in thousands)

Year	Age group					
	0-2	3-6	7-14	15-17	18-19	20-24
in thousands						
1988	1 797.4	2 736.5	5 138.9	1 679.2	1 018.3	2 483.2
2002	1 091.6	1 607.4	4 105.3	1 859.4	1 371.8	3 197.0
2003	1 064.0	1 556.4	2 854.2	1 676.0	1 856.9	3 944.9
% of the population						
1988	4.7	7.2	13.5	4.4	2.7	6.6
2002	2.9	4.2	10.7	4.9	3.6	8.4
2003	2.8	4.1	7.5	4.4	4.9	10.3

Source: Report by RRL (2004).

The changes in the source of income of the population are reflected in the structure of households by the main source of income and, what follows, by the socio-economic status of the person maintaining the household.

Table 4. Households by the main source of income in 1988 and 2002

Year	Total	Main source of income					
		Employment in the public sector	Employment in the private sector		Non-earned income		Dependent
			Total	Own farm	Total	Retirement pay- ments and pensions	
in thous.	%						
<b>Total</b>							
1988	11 970.6	55.0	17.9	12.1	27.1	26.2	x
2002	13 337.0	19.5	32.1	4.9	43.0	37.6	3.9
<b>City</b>							
1988	7 864.3	62.7	8.2	1.1	29.1	28.1	x
2002	8 964.5	21.8	29.3	0.4	42.2	36.8	5.1
<b>Village</b>							
1988	4 106.3	40.0	36.6	33.3	23.4	22.7	x
2002	4 373.5	15.6	37.9	14.3	44.5	41.2	1.5

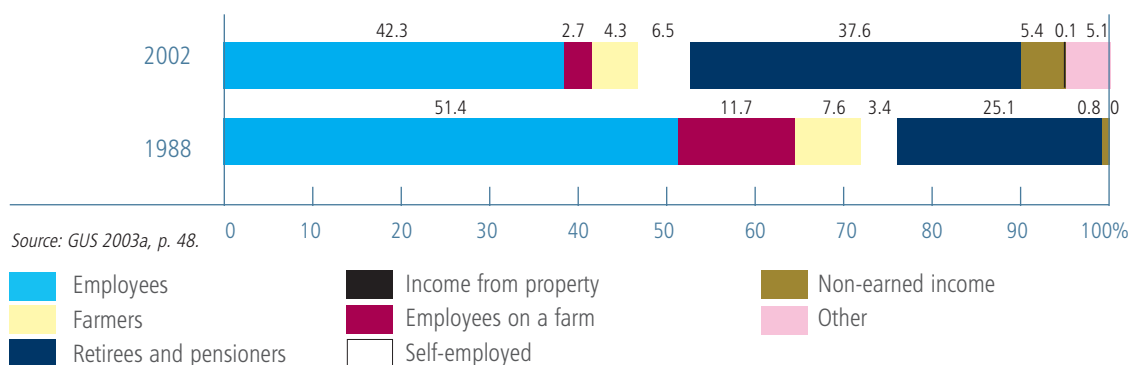
Source: GUS 2003a.

Between 1988 and 2002 the percentage of households where employment was the main source of income (except for the self-employed) decreased. The number of households of retirees, pensioners and persons maintaining themselves from non-earned income (among others from social benefits and unemployment benefits) increased. A considerable share of the families are threatened with poverty. In 2003 5.4% of families with one child, 10.2% with two children, 17.9% with three children, 41.6% with three or more children and 13% of single parent families lived below the existential minimum<sup>3</sup> (those figures increased in comparison with 2002 – Szukielojć-Bieńkuńska 2004). The poverty of families with children is a consequence of the lack of parents' salary

<sup>3</sup> This means such a level of satisfying the needs below which there occurs a biological threat to life and psycho-physical development.



Figure 9. Households by socio-economic group in 1988 and 2002



Source: GUS 2003a, p. 48.

income caused by unemployment or professional inactivity. In 2002 47% of the families with children aged below 14, and in which none of the parents worked, lived in extreme poverty. The salary income of one parent does not protect the family from poverty.

The education of children is limited by financial problems. This may result in the children inheriting the professional and material status of their parents.

The overview of the situation of families would not be complete if it was reduced to exposing difficulties. Some families have benefited from the transformation and seized their chance on the labour market along with the widening offer of consumer goods and services. Educational and consumer aspirations have increased. At the same time, however, the efforts to obtain a higher living standard and to create the best possible conditions for the development of children became a factor which has limited the number of children per family.

#### 4. Past policies towards the family and children

The declared need to support the family in the fulfillment of its functions, as expressed in government programs ("Family policy program" from 1997, "Pro-family policy program" from 1999, "Social policy strategy for 2002-2005"), was not translated into solutions significantly supporting families and children. The adopted solutions were mainly of a selective character. Some of them lacked stability. For instance, preferences for families with many children proved to be temporary, as did the lengthening of maternity leave.

The lack of stable solutions was connected with changes in the programmes of successive governments. Nor can we neglect to mention the steady limiting of expenditures for social purposes, regardless of the ideological differences in the different governments' programmes. As a result, monetary social benefits were received by a decreasing group of families, due to the constant lowering of the income criterion. The importance of family benefits for the income of families decreased and their share in the families' income structure

constantly declined. Families with many children posed the exception to the rule. This was connected with preferences for such families (the amount of benefits was dependent on the number of children). However, the low value of the benefits did not protect such families from poverty.

In 2004 new regulations concerning the granting of family benefits entered into force. The family benefit is a basic benefit and its amount depends on the age of a child (44 PLN

for a child under 5 years, 56 PLN for a child aged 6-16, 65 PLN for a child over 17). The family benefit is supplemented by other benefits such as: the birth benefit (a one-off payment of 500 PLN); the benefit for child-care during child-rearing leave (400 PLN a month for 24 months); the child-rearing benefit for a single parent who lost the right to un-

employment benefits and is raising a child aged below 7 (400 PLN a month for three years); the benefit for the education and rehabilitation of a disabled child (50 PLN per a child aged below 5 and 70 PLN per child aged over 5); the benefit connected with the beginning of a school year (90 PLN once a year); and the benefit connected with the beginning of education by a child in a school outside the place of residence (80 PLN monthly for 10 months). The short period of the new system's functioning does not allow a comprehensive evaluation of its effects. It was negatively received by the public due to the liquidation of the alimony fund and its replacing with a child-rearing supplementary benefit for single parents. This provoked protests from the former beneficiaries of the fund. It also resulted in an increased number of divorce petitions on the part of persons who in this way wanted to obtain the right to receive this benefit.

Tax allowances connected with the education of children in non-state schools and their commuting to schools located outside the place of residence were withdrawn. Instead, low-income families received supplements to their family benefits connected with the education of a child in a school located outside the place of residence.

The scope of solutions aimed at enabling women (parents) to reconcile professional and family duties was reduced. Obtaining a child-rearing benefit by persons on child-rearing leave was conditioned on income level (with a changing, constantly lowered criterion). The amount of the nursing benefit was reduced (from 100 to 80% of salary), and this resulted in a decreased interest in those forms of aid. Making the rights of men and women equal with respect to obtaining parental leave for the care over a child did not result in any changes. Women continue to be the recipients of those benefits. Due to their innate maternal functions they also use the benefits connected with pregnancy and childbirth. Altogether this means that employers look at a female employee through her factual or even potential family duties. This weakens women's position on the labour market both at the moment of employment and in terms of professional promotion.

## 5. On the need for family- and child-friendly social policy

A regression took place in the development of the institutions supporting the family in its nursing and rearing function, and in facilitating care for the children of working mothers. Fewer and fewer families use day-care facilities. Between 1990 and 2002 the number of children at day-cares dropped from 137,500 to 45,300. This was only partly the result of the lower population of the youngest generations. In 1990, of 100 children aged below 3, only 42 went to a day-care, while in 2002 this figure amounted to just 19 children.

Less than half of children aged 3-6 goes to a kindergarten. The number of children going to kindergartens increased from 328 in 1990 to 389 in 2002 per 1,000 children aged 3-6. The accessibility of day-cares and kindergartens is limited by a commercial system of paying for those child-care services, something which exceeds the financial possibilities of numerous families.

Difficulties in finding a job, and fears of losing it, result in women submitting their private plans to the situation on the labour market. This does not mean the complete abandonment of matrimonial or procreation plans, but it usually results in their postponement or modification, which entails a limiting of the fertility rate.

Current demographic changes have greatly affected the decline in fertility. Dirk van de Kaa estimates that "Poland's accession to the European Union will result in economic and social changes that will cause a further shift in value systems"<sup>4</sup> and which will affect attitudes towards marriage and family. The attitudes of some young people towards founding a family based on a formalized union will be affected to a larger extent by the patterns of non-formalized unions present in Western countries. However, it must be remembered that for a considerable percentage of young people marriage in its traditional form still has a high value.

The strengthening of the family model of two working parents (which is characteristic for European Union countries) engenders the need for the development and improvement of instruments that will favour the reconciliation of professional and family duties by both parents. It is worth repeating that higher fertility rates are observed in those EU countries with a high level of women in professional activity that boast well-developed instruments allowing women to reconcile professional and family duties. The Scandinavian countries and France belong to that group (Muszyńska 2003, Balcerzak-Paradowska 2004, Kotowska 2004).

The real equality of men and women in education, on the labour market and in the family, is connected with a partnership family model. Partnership requires mental changes on the part of partners themselves, their environment and employers, too.

<sup>4</sup> A speech by D. van de Kaa delivered during the ceremony when he was awarded with the title of doctor honoris causa by the Warsaw School of Economics on May 7, 2003.

The workplace is a subject of family policy whose importance is ever more often emphasized in Western countries. The practices employed by enterprises (work-life balance, family-friendly employment) are seen as instruments for reconciling employees' professional and social roles, as well as instruments which favour work efficiency and are beneficial for the employers themselves. A family-friendly enterprise is also one where flexible employment and time conditions are available for employees. Currently in Poland there are barriers which inhibit the intensification of such activities, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises. Such barriers also appear on the part of the employees. Part-time employment is the most common non-standard form of employment. It results in lower salary, lack of employment stability and the prospect of lower retirement pay.

Politicians working in this area often think in the following terms: if it is difficult (though not impossible) to create a social policy that would influence the quantitative development of the young population, let's focus on quality. This means the creation of conditions for the development of upbringing, educational, health, sports and recreational services, the improvement of said services' quality, and widening the accessibility to those services for children from all environments, especially underprivileged ones. This obvious demand, which time and again has been tabled by the experts (Golinowska [ed.] 1994; Balcerzak-Paradowska 1999, and others), as well as included in subsequent government documents ("Family policy program" from 1997, "Pro-family policy program" from 1999, "national Social Integration Strategy 2004") finds but dim reflection in decisions made concerning the allocation of public funds. Thus, the realization of this demand requires not only a change in the state's priorities, for it is also a task for social organizations and local communities.

## Summary

Until the beginning of the 1990s Poland numbered among countries with high demographic dynamism and a favourable age-structure – we were a society of young people. However, the last 14 years have been characterized not only by the weakening of demographic dynamism, but also by population decline and transformation in age structure. The population is not growing and its structure is changing. Poland is beginning to age.

The main reasons behind the halt in population development prominently include the negative balance of migrations and the negative balance of natural movement (the difference between the number of births and deaths). Each year during the 1990s, between 10,000 and 20,000 more people left Poland to live elsewhere than settled here. However, due to Poland's accession to the European Union, foreign migration processes will probably have a wider scale. Due to the difficult situation on the labour market in Poland, seeking a job abroad may become more common, especially taking into account the increasing liberalization of the EU countries' labour markets.

What raises concerns from the point of view of the quantitative and qualitative consequences for the demographic and socio-economic development of the country is the decline in the number of births below the simple replacement level. Those changes result from shifts in family formation and fertility patterns. The propensity to marry is declining and it is only to a small extent being replaced by the formation of non-formalized unions. Delayed entry into marriage is predominant; marriages are contracted by persons in older age groups. At the same time, remaining single is becoming more widespread.

The changes of the female fertility model have taken place at an even faster pace. Although the number of extra-marital

births is increasing, marital births are still predominant. The postponement of matrimonial decisions usually means delayed procreation and, as a consequence, a decline in fertility rates. When comparing these tendencies with trends present in Western European countries it should be noted that the direction of the changes is analogous, but their pace is different. Changes in the forms of married family life are appearing more slowly than they did in Western countries, while the fertility changes are characterized by especially high dynamism. E. Frątczak estimated that, while the changes in Western countries took place over 27 years, in Poland 14 years was enough to achieve a similarly low fertility rate and negative natural increase. These tendencies, together with increasing life expectancy, have resulted in the ageing of Poland's population. In the future they will engender a tendency toward population decline.

Analysis of the tendencies with respect to the changes in family forms and fertility patterns (along with the high pace of those processes) points to factors connected with Poland's socio-economic transformation. This thesis is further confirmed by the results of studies indicating the main causes of the demographic transformations. On the one hand they are connected with the stages of entering adult life by young people and they concern both men and women. This includes: prolonged schooling/studying period; a prolonged period of job seeking (due to the current situation on the labour market in Poland); and the stabilization of professional position. The Italian researcher Massimo Levi Bacci dubbed this the "delay syndrome" (Levi Bacci 2004). Delayed family formation and the decline in fertility rates are also a result of: the limited accessibility of housing; high housing maintenance costs relative to family income; expectations concerning living standards; and the effort to ensure optimal developmental conditions for offspring, in order to provide them with the chance for a better start in adult life.

Further modification of women's social roles is a limiting factor for fertility rates. Women show higher educational mobility than men and attain a higher educational level. They want to apply their qualifications on the labour market, but

the market is not women-friendly. They have more difficult access in gaining jobs, promotion or achieving higher positions. Maternal and family duties in connection with professional work cause a double burden for women. They can only count on their partners to an insignificant extent. The family model where a working woman performs most of the household duties is still predominant. Nor is family policy favourable to women. The scope of benefits that allow for personal care over a child was reduced (changes in child-rearing and nursing benefits) and there was a regression in the development of pre-school institutions. Other forms facilitating the reconciling of family and professional roles (such as flexible working hours) have not been developed. Women are not shunning marriage and having children, but the aforementioned barriers influence the postponement of matrimonial decisions and the choice to limit the number of children. To counteract the current demographic trends it is necessary to implement actions aimed at removing or at least reducing those barriers.