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## **NEW PATTERNS OF FAMILY FORMATION AND FAMILY LIFE IN POLAND**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the course of the last three decades profound transformations have involved the demographic and social context of family in European countries. They affected the traditional family. Marriages have become rarer, come later in life and are more fragile. Cohabitation has been widespread and the proportion of births out of wedlock has increased (Klinger 1993). The attitudes towards the children in modern societies have also been changing due to socio-economic and cultural changes taking place. The diffusion of modern contraceptive methods, which has been accompanied by a growing liberalisation in regard of induced abortion have determined drop of total fertility rates below replacement level in all European countries (Kowalska, 1996). The observed changes do not constitute isolated events but are inserted within the great transformation of social values and norms that have affected contemporary societies and which have profoundly affected the family (Kaa D.J. van dee 1987, 1994; Kotowska 1999; Kowalska 1999). The attributes of these changes and their scope differ across countries. The following aspects are noteworthy during discussion on factors determining transformation.

Some theories agree with great impact of individualism in the post-industrial societies on the changes in reproductive behaviour. Other approaches emphasise the overcoming of asymmetrical gender roles within the couple that mark the end of the era of the king-child and inaugurate a phase of adult-centred preoccupations, with greater attention to self-fulfilment and the quality of the relations between parents. This gratification can be reached only with one or two children and a greater number of offspring is not necessary taking into account the rising costs of investment in human capital.

The new status of woman also has strong impact on the evolution in demographic and social behaviours. The increased access of females to education and their more qualified position in the labour market, the possibility of a more effective control of fertility lead to conflict between maternal role and the other external roles that woman plays today. Females work outside the family undoubtedly makes the domestic tasks more difficult due to the presence of children, in particularly when there is a shortage of adequate care. Child does not only mean direct monetary costs, but he/she needs also mother's and father's time. Motherhood inevitably enters into conflicts with professional activity and such conflict force woman very often to interrupt this activity, at least as long as the child(ren) are very young. The existing inconsistencies between maternal and professional roles may be solved in

different ways according to the stage of development of modernisation and individualisation, and to existing norms and values. It seems however that the majority of modern European societies are more interested in achievement a higher social quality, a higher standard of living and self-fulfilment than in development of human being with high level of altruism, of life culture, morality and spirituality Kowalska 1999; Kowalska 2000).

## **1. HUMAN CAPITAL AND CHANGES IN THE AGE STRUCTURE OF THE POPULATION**

At the end of 2000 the population of Poland was 38 644 thousand. In recent years the rate of annual population growth decreased steadily to -0,3 per 1000 population in 2000 (*see figure 1*). Poland ranks low in Europe with regard to population growth. Other countries in Europe with lower (but still positive) growth rates include Slovenia and Portugal. All other Central European countries and former Soviet Union countries have negative natural increase. (Council of Europe, 2001).

Polish society is relatively young. In 2000, the number of children at the age below 18 amounted to 9304,7 thousand and was lower as compared to 11318,7 thousand in 1990. The proportion of population at the pre-working age was 24 per cent (22 per cent in urban areas and 27 per cent in rural ones), of which 19% was children aged 0-14. In 1990, these frequencies were higher and amounted to 30 per cent for the whole country, 29 per cent for urban areas and 31 per cent for rural ones. Almost 15% of the population was at the post-working age (18-59 for women; 18-64 for men), and 61 per cent of working age (*see table 1*). The changes in proportions resulted from the permanent declining number of life births. The median age is about 34 years (35 for females and slightly over 32 for males). By contrast, the current median age of Europe's population (exclusive of the former Soviet countries) is almost 36,7.

The rapid growth of the working-age population, combined with economic restructuring, has distinct, direct social and economic consequences, especially for families affected by unemployment. Considering that until 2005 the working-age population will grow in absolute terms of about 1,1 million, one should keep in mind the future social and economic problems that will arise from the ageing of Poland's population.

### ***Ageing of population***

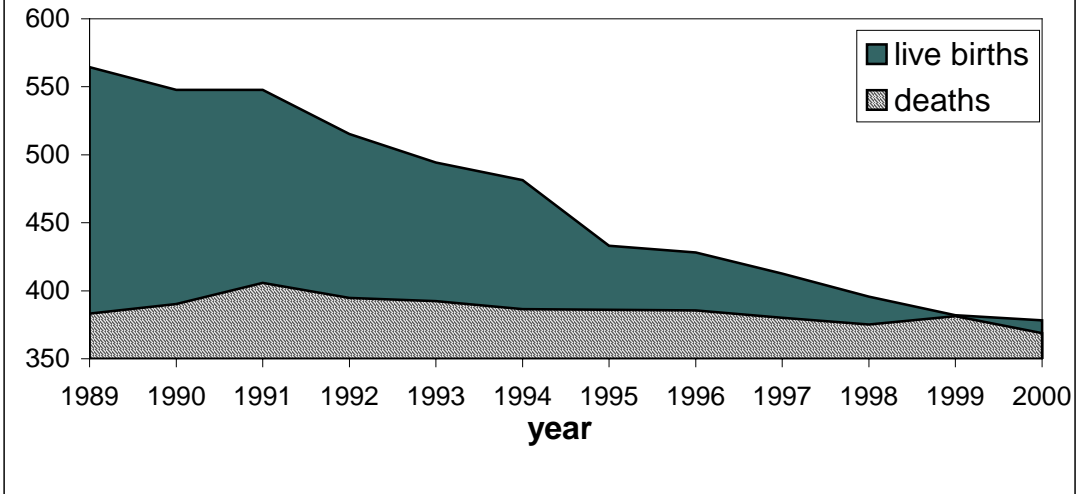
In 2000, 12,3 per cent of the population was aged 65 and over. It is expected that this will increase to 13,0% by 2010. After 2010, when many people born in early 1950s reach the post-working age, the ageing process will accelerate in Poland.

The ageing of population requires the development of modern social-security system for the elderly, and especially rapid implementation of efficient operating principles for the pension system. This is especially true of housing policy because of the specific needs of elderly ( usually less physically fit, or fully disabled and requiring constant assistance).

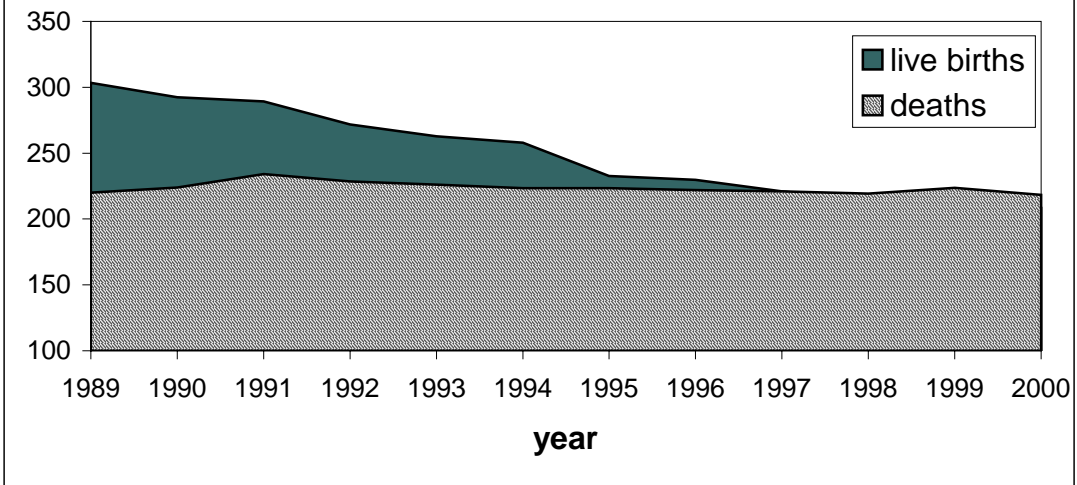
## **2. DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT OF THE FAMILY**

Poland like the majority of Eastern and Central European countries experiences, in recent years, also significant changes in demographic, social and cultural processes. They are parallel to socio-economic transformation which may be characterised by the such basic

**Fig.1. Natural increase, Poland, 1989-2000**  
**Total**



**Urban areas**



**Rural areas**

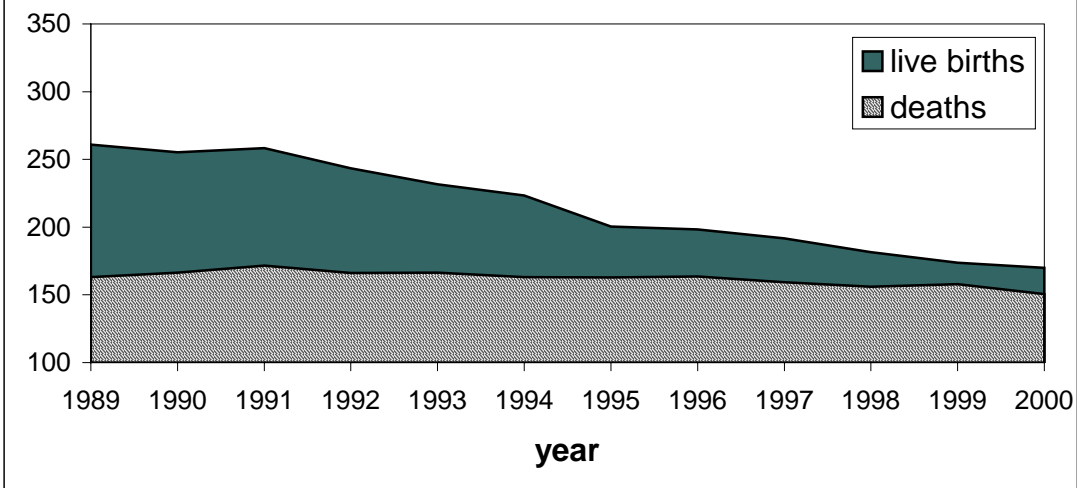


Table 1. Population by sex and age, Poland, 1989-2000

Groups of age	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<b>in thousands</b>												
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38038,4</b>	<b>38183,2</b>	<b>38309,2</b>	<b>38418,1</b>	<b>38504,7</b>	<b>38580,6</b>	<b>38609,4</b>	<b>38639,3</b>	<b>38660,0</b>	<b>38667,0</b>	<b>38653,6</b>	<b>38644,2</b>
<b>0 – 2 years</b>	1725,9	1669,7	1629,2	1581,3	1530,5	1466,7	1387,6	1324,4	1259,0	1223,8	1179,6	1146,6
<b>3 – 6</b>	2669,3	2560,2	2452,2	2342,9	2257,9	2201,9	2130,6	2063,6	2001,0	1891,1	1808,5	1731,2
<b>7 – 14</b>	5217,7	5292,8	5329,4	5352,9	5322,9	5253,9	5159,9	5058,1	4909,5	4746,2	4569,5	4395,2
<b>15 – 18</b>	2277,1	2358,6	2436,9	2496	2541,8	2575,1	2597,9	2615	2650,3	2690,4	2704,2	2710,2
<b>of which::</b>	539,9	562,6	572,5	598,2	621,1	640,3	631,2	643,5	654,3	662,8	648,0	678,5
<b>19 – 24</b>	2979,6	3016,8	3086,7	3172,8	3274,7	3397,6	3513,5	3604,6	3685,0	3765,8	3830,0	3856,6
<b>0 – 17</b>	11350,1	11318,7	11275,2	11174,9	11032,1	10857,3	10644,8	10417,5	10165,5	9888,7	9613,8	9304,7
<b>18 -59/64</b>	21889,6	21961,7	22055,5	22181,3	22332,5	22501,4	22647,4	22820,0	23014,0	23226,3	23423,5	23654,9
<b>of which:</b>												
<b>18 – 44</b>	15329,9	15491,4	15535,6	15566,5	15582,9	15611,1	15594,5	15584,7	15572,9	15565,9	15544,1	15533,7
<b>45 - 59/64</b>	6559,8	6470,4	6519,9	6614,7	6749,6	6890,3	7052,9	7235,3	7441,1	7660,4	7879,4	8121,2
<b>60/65&gt;</b>	4798,7	4902,7	4978,5	5061,9	5140,1	5222	5317,2	5401,8	5480,5	5552,0	5616,3	5684,6
<b>0 – 14</b>	9612,9	9522,7	9410,9	9277,1	9111,4	8922,5	8678,2	8446,1	8169,5	7861,1	7557,6	7273,0
<b>15 – 64</b>	24639,8	24776,2	24941,4	25109,3	25267,6	25438,6	25596,5	25767,4	25971,8	26211,4	26432,3	26625,1
<b>65 years &gt;</b>	3785,7	3884,2	3957,0	4031,7	4125,7	4219,4	4334,7	4425,9	4518,7	4594,5	4663,7	4746,1
<b>Females in reproductive age 15 – 49 years</b>	9342,4	9435,1	9550,2	9670,9	9799	9925,5	10052,8	10114,5	10170,3	10215,2	10246,8	10250,5
<b>annual growth in thousands</b>												
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>144,8</b>	<b>126,0</b>	<b>108,9</b>	<b>86,6</b>	<b>75,9</b>	<b>28,8</b>	<b>29,9</b>	<b>20,7</b>	<b>7,0</b>	<b>-13,4</b>	<b>-9,4</b>
<b>0-2 years</b>	x	-56,2	-40,5	-47,9	-50,8	-63,8	-79,1	-63,3	-65,4	-35,2	-44,2	-33,0
<b>3 – 6</b>	x	-109,1	-108	-109,4	-85	-56	-71,3	-67	-62,6	-109,9	-82,6	-77,3
<b>7 – 14</b>	x	75,1	36,6	23,4	-29,9	-69	-94	-101,8	-148,6	-163,3	176,7	-174,3
<b>15 – 18</b>	x	81,5	78,3	59,2	45,8	33,2	22,8	17,1	35,3	40,1	13,8	6,0
<b>of which:</b>	x	22,7	9,9	25,7	22,9	19,2	-9,1	12,3	10,7	8,6	-14,8	30,5
<b>19 – 24</b>	x	37,2	69,9	86,1	101,9	122,9	116,0	91,1	80,4	80,8	64,2	26,6
<b>0 – 17</b>	x	-31,3	-43,5	-100,3	-142,8	-174,8	-212,5	-227,3	-252	-276,8	-274,9	-309,1
<b>18 -59/64</b>	x	72,1	93,8	125,8	151,2	168,8	146,1	172,6	194	212,3	197,2	231,4
<b>of which:</b>												
<b>18 – 44</b>	x	161,5	44,2	30,9	16,3	28,2	-16,6	-9,9	-11,8	-7,0	-21,8	-10,4
<b>45 - 59/64</b>	x	-89,4	49,5	94,8	134,9	140,6	162,6	182,4	205,7	219,3	219,0	241,8
<b>60/65 &gt;</b>	x	104	75,8	83,4	78,2	81,9	95,2	84,7	78,6	71,5	64,3	68,3
<b>0 – 14</b>	x	-90,2	-111,9	-133,8	-165,7	-188,9	-244,3	-232,1	-276,5	-308,4	-303,5	-284,6
<b>15 – 64</b>	x	136,4	165,2	167,9	158,3	171	157,9	170,9	204,4	239,6	220,9	192,8
<b>65 &gt;</b>	x	98,6	72,7	74,7	94	93,7	115,3	91,1	92,8	75,8	69,2	82,4
<b>Females in reproductive age 15 - 49 years</b>	x	92,7	115,1	120,7	128,1	126,5	127,3	61,6	55,8	44,9	31,6	3,7

Source: Podstawowe Informacje o rozwoju demograficznym Polski 1990-2000(Basic informations of demographic development of Poland 1990-2000), GUS, Warszawa 2001.

phenomena as: permanent yearly growth of GDP, permanent yearly decline of inflation rate, permanent growth of the share of services in GDP and decline of the share of industry and agriculture. One may observe also high but declining unemployment rate and increasing differentiation of standard living.

Poland is one of the countries of transition where demographic changes were not remarkable at the beginning of the 1990s but there were some new phenomena in population processes in the middle and at the end of this decade. Significant decline of number of marriages and births due to decreasing propensity of union formation and fertility, the postponement of first transition from single to married and of childbearing are the main prerequisites of new patterns of marital and reproductive attitudes and behaviours.

## **2.1. THE PLACE OF FAMILY IN PRESENT-DAY SOCIETY**

It is beyond argument, that the family with responsible and loving parents is the best environment for child's growing up and development. Polish patterns of family formation are favourable for children and youth. Marriage has remained the basis of family life and the main condition for the creation of new generations. Cohabitation has not been widespread, though the increasing number of illegitimate births may justify the hypothesis that the informal partnership has become more popular form of family formation.

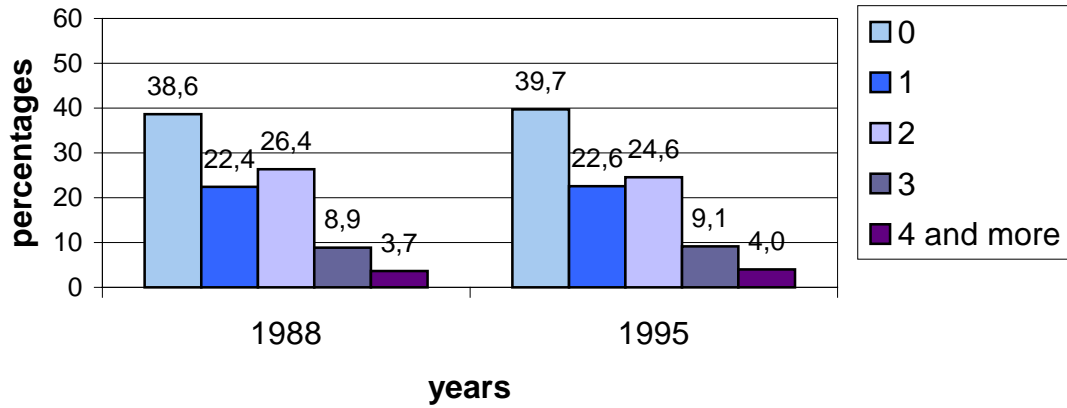
According to data from Micro census, the number of families in 1995 amounted to 10,5 million and the majority of them (60 per cent) consisted of both parents with children under 24. One out of six families (17 per cent) belonged to the group of one parent families and 23 per cent composed the group of parents without children (in the overwhelming majority of childless families children had left parental home). The model of one child or two children is the most frequent in Polish society (80 per cent of all families follow such fertility mode (*see figure 2*).

## **2.2. POLISH PATTERNS OF FAMILY FORMATION**

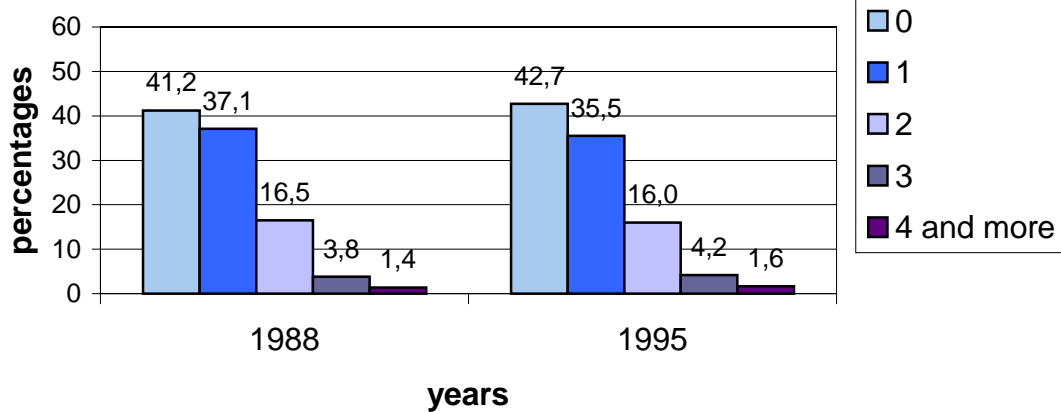
As in almost all European countries the number of marriages in Poland has been declining steadily since the early 1980s (Kowalska, 2001). In the period of transition (1989-2000) the decrease of absolute numbers of marriages amounted to 44,5 thousand and 17,4 per cent, in spite of more numerous cohorts entering marriageable age. The crude marriage rate for the whole country decreased from 6,7 per 1000 population in 1989 to 5,5 in 2000. Permanent decline of marriage intensity has remained the main reason of declining trend of marriages. Because of the positive changes in the population age structure by age (relatively more persons in marriageable age), changes of marriage propensity have stronger impact on the number of contracted marriages than structure changes. The steadily decrease of new contracted marriages and simultaneous increase of dissolved unions has led to negative balance between these two figures since 1993; in 2000 it amounted to 3,4 thousand (*see figure 3 and figure 4*).

Poland is one of the countries where entry into first marriage and first childbearing take place at an early age (20-24 years for females and 25-29 for males). The median age at first marriage in 2000 was 22,9 years for females (22,4 years in 1989) and 25,1 years for males (24,3 in 1989). In the last five years the share of the youngest groups has decreased in favour of the groups aged 25-29 for females and 30-34 for males (*see figure 5*).

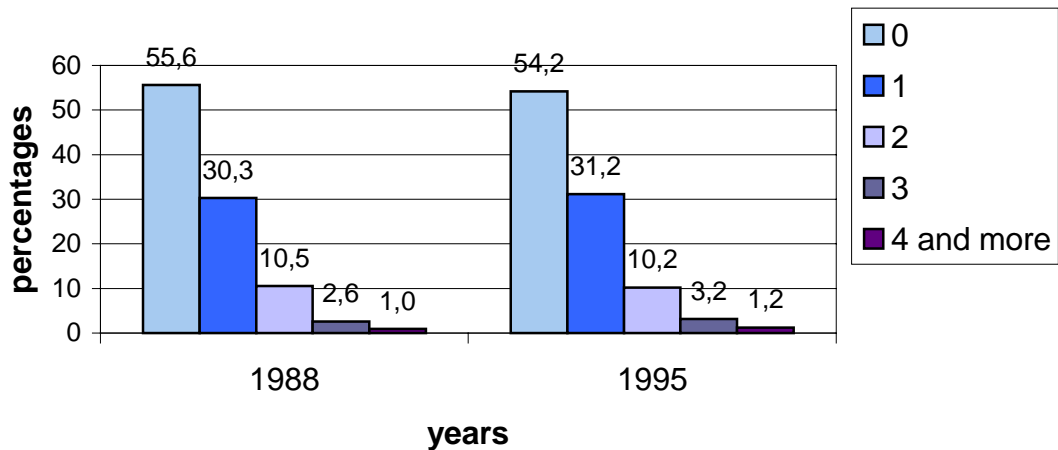
**Fig.2. Polish families by number of maintained children aged under 25, Poland, 1988, 1995**  
**Marriages**



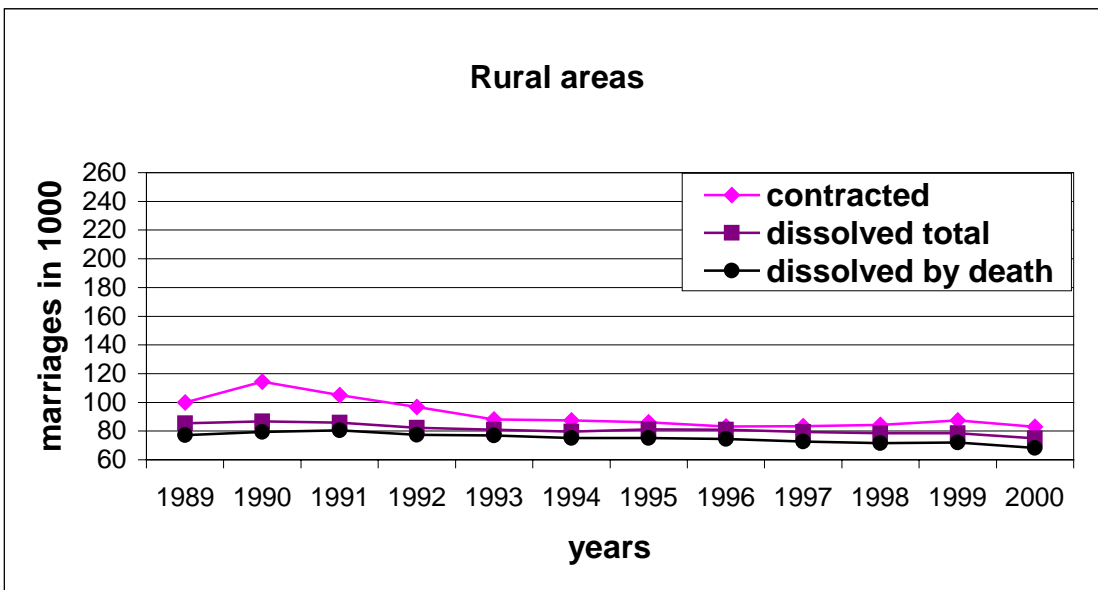
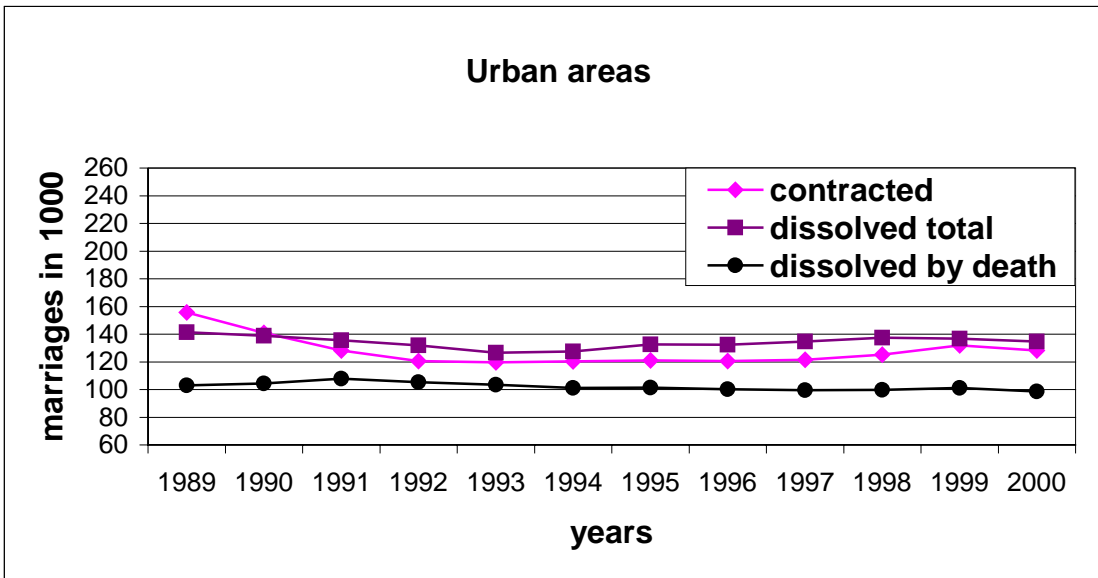
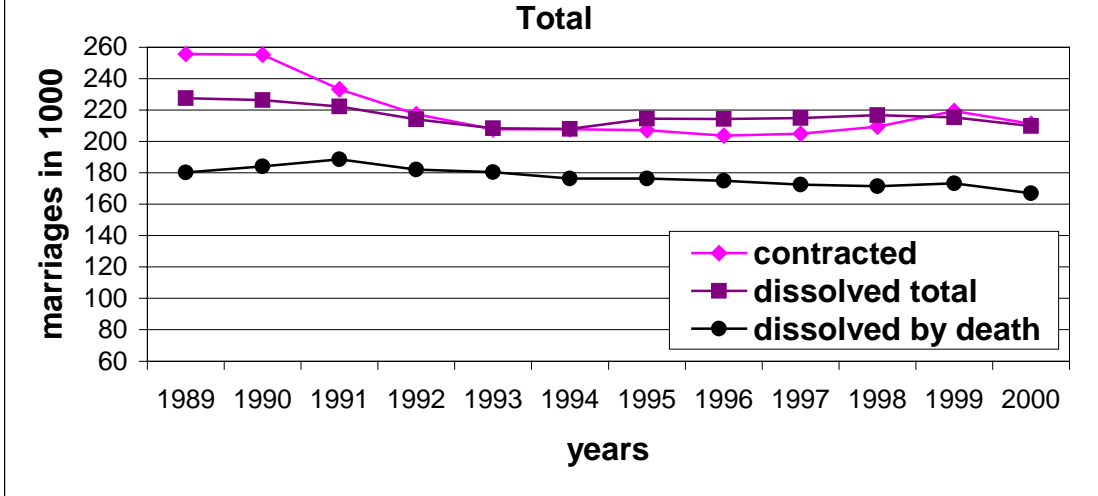
**Mothers**

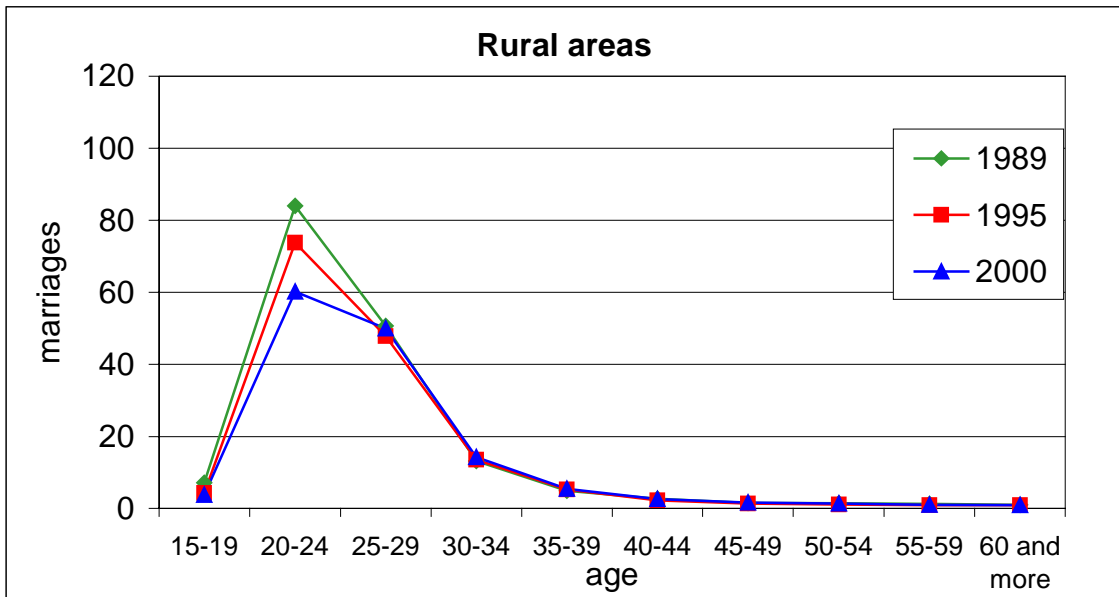
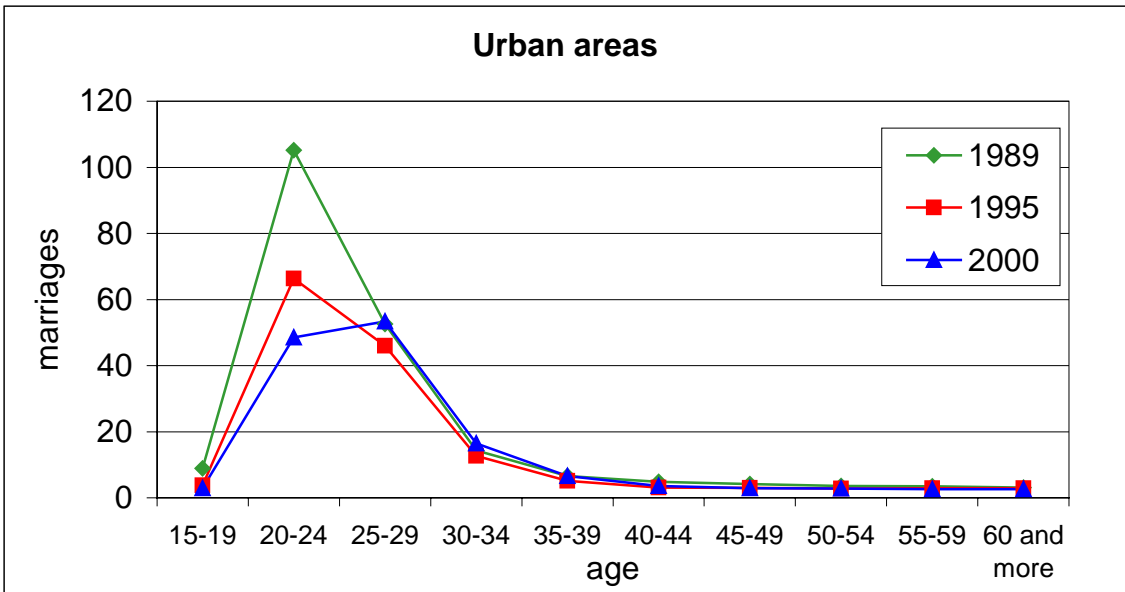
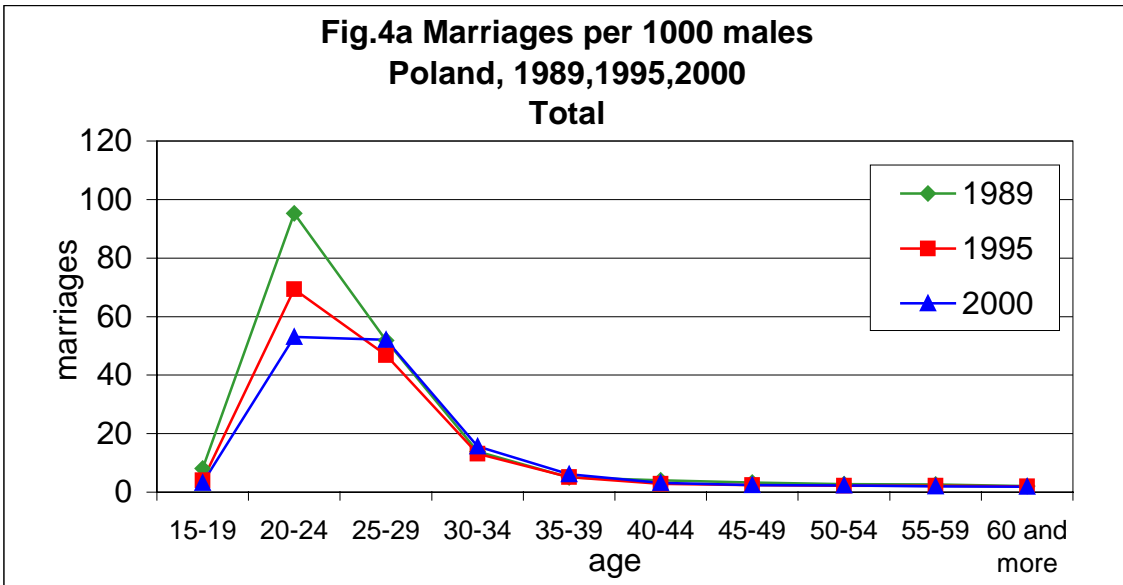


**Fathers**



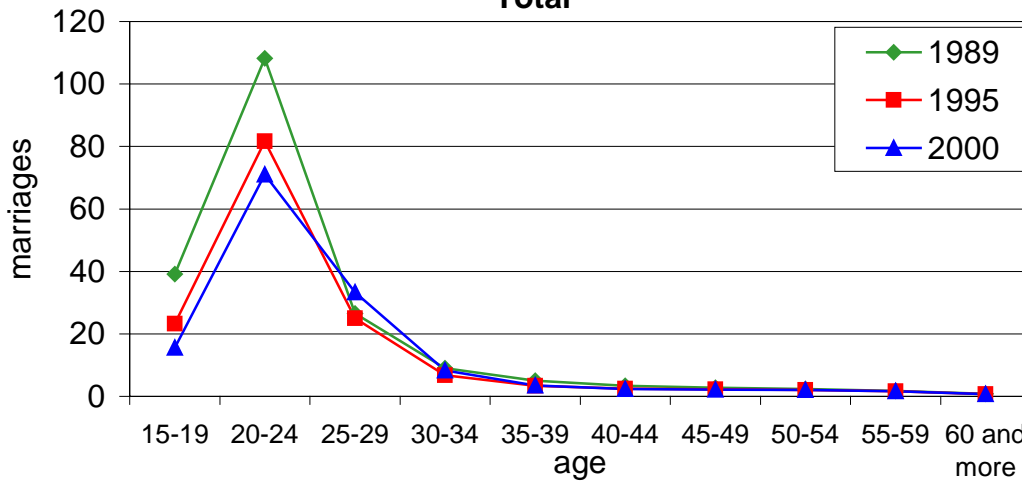
**Fig.3. Marriages contracted and dissolved, Poland, 1989-2000.**



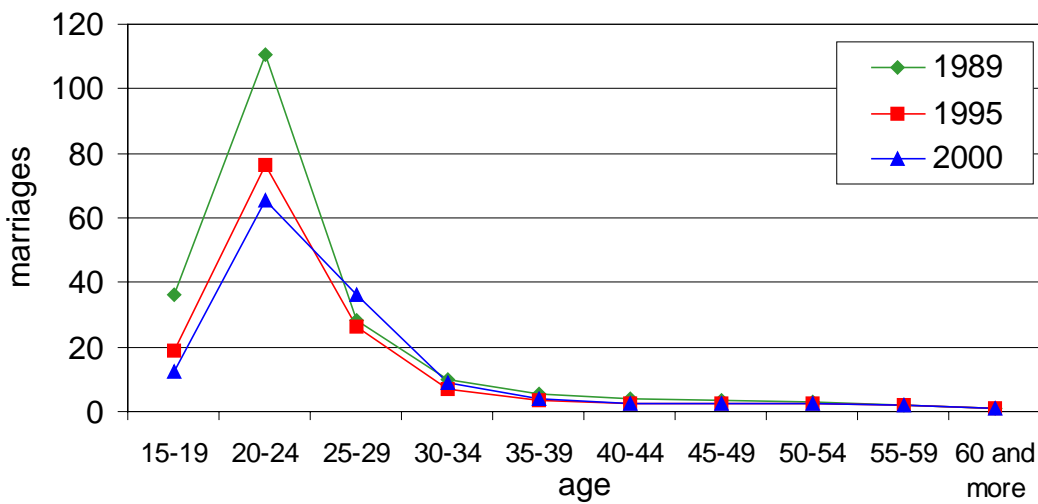




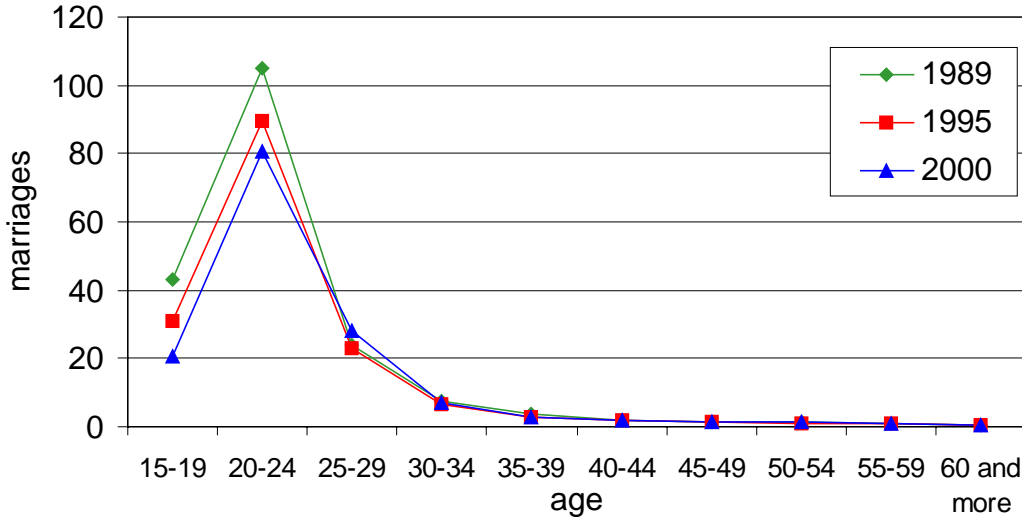
**Fig.4b. Marriages per 1000 females  
Poland, 1989,1995,2000  
Total**



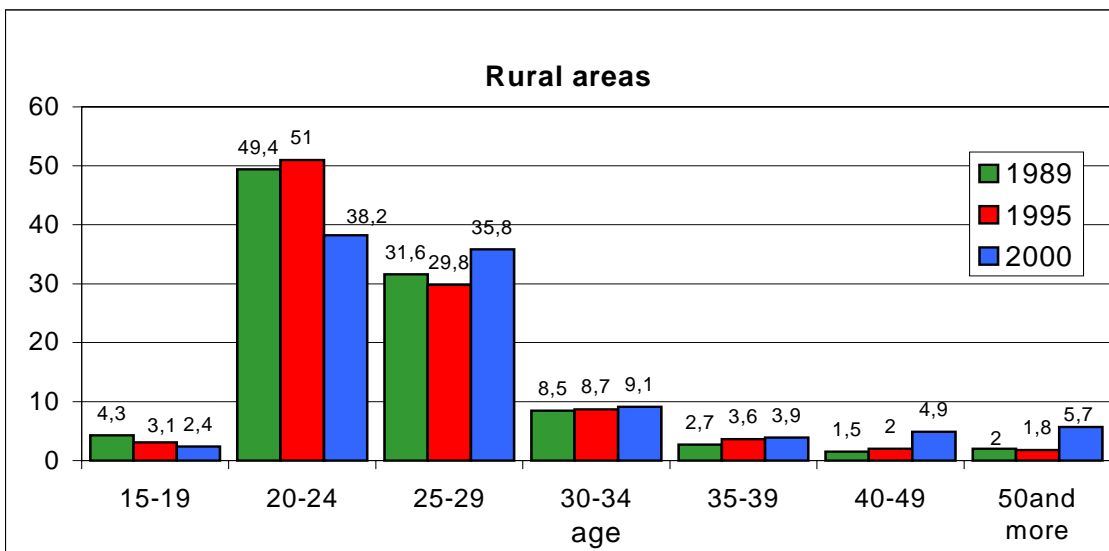
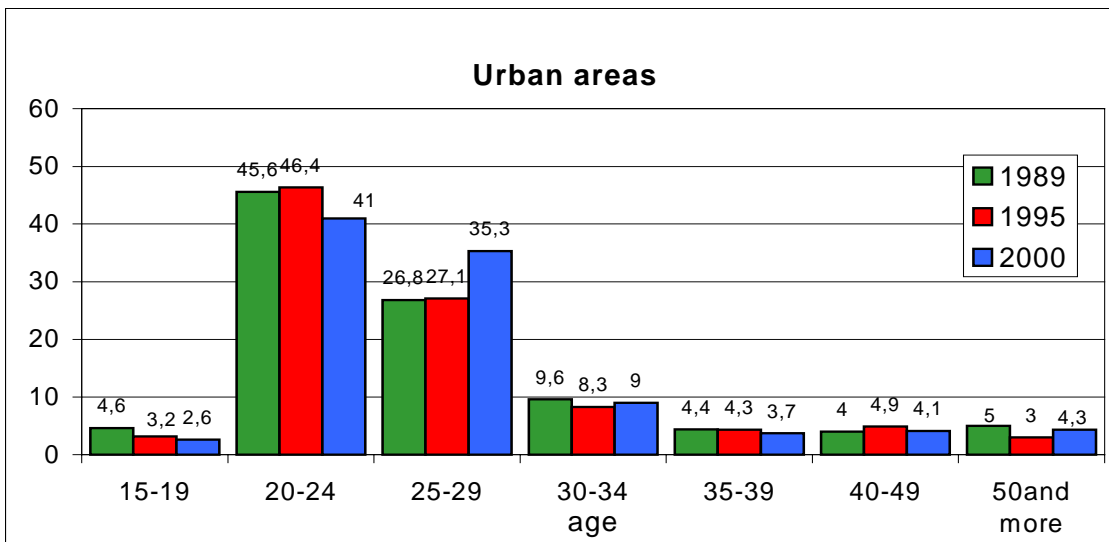
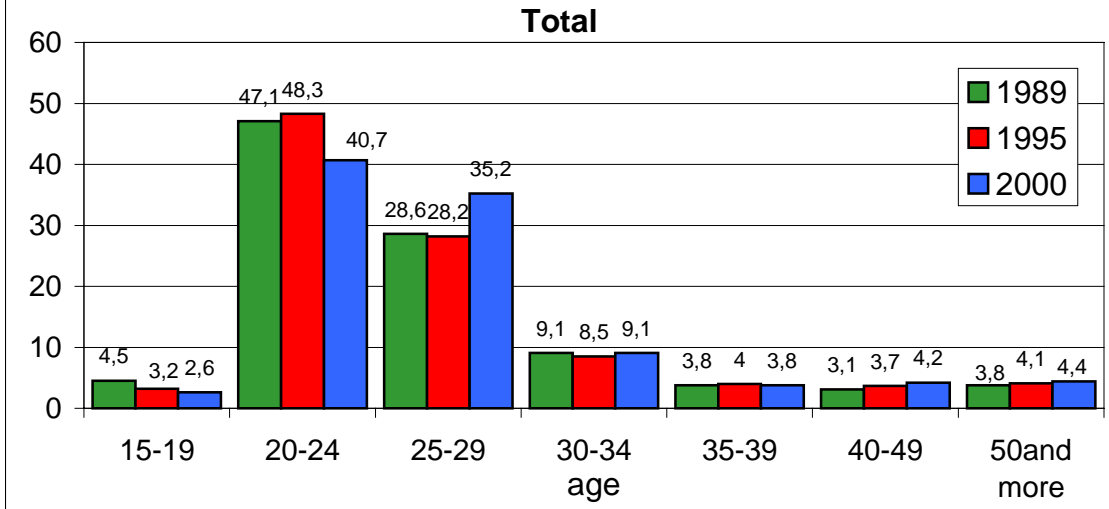
**Urban areas**



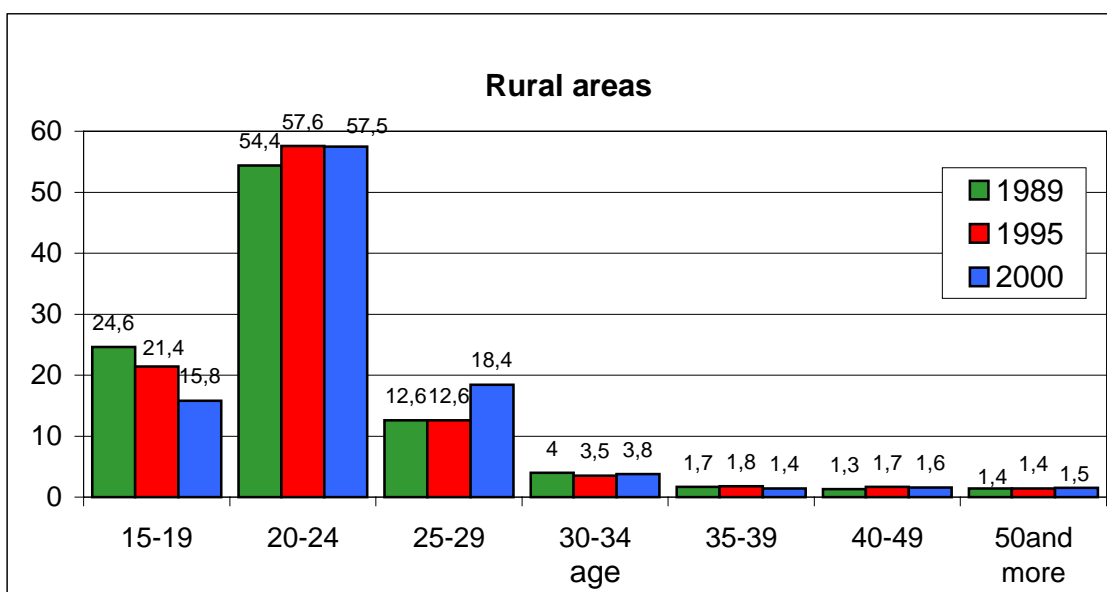
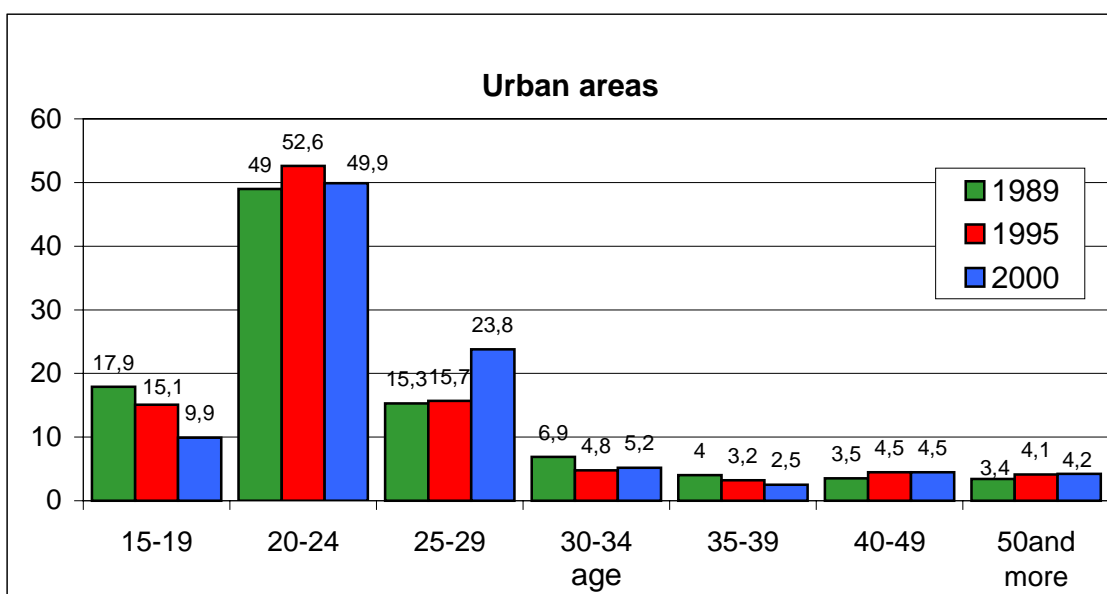
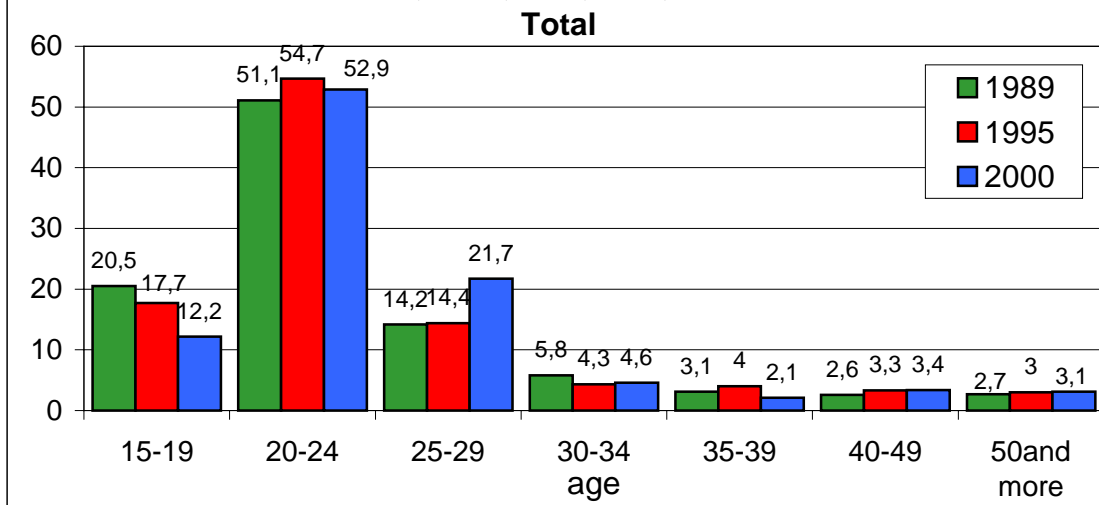
**Rural areas**



**Fig.5a. Bridegrooms and bridges by age at marriage, Poland, 1989,1995,2000; Males**



**Fig.5b. Bridegrooms and bridges by age at marriage, Poland, 1989,1995,2000; Females**



It is worth noting that the number of teenage girls entering into first marriage at the age under 18 has been declining systematically from 7112 (2,8 per cent of all married women) in 1990 to 2415 (1,1 per cent) in 2000. The similar negative trends are registered for men. In 1990, 12400 boys (4,9 per cent of all married men) were under 20 at the day of marriage; in 2000 the similar figures amounted to 5437 and to 2,6 per cent respectively.

### **2.3. POLISH PATTERNS OF FAMILY DISSOLUTION**

The family in Poland is a fairly stable unit. At average, only one out five unions dissolve due to divorce, the other four - due to death of one of spouses. The number of divorces has been falling - with some fluctuations - from the highest level of 52,9 thousand in 1984 to 27,9 thousand in 1993. However, during the last four years it increased to 42,8 thousand (see figure 2). The crude divorce rate has remained steady and relatively low as compared to the other European countries; it amounts to 1,1 per thousand population. The rate of divorces per 1000 of contracted marriages decreased from 166 in 1990 to 203 in 2000.

Most marriages (44 per cent of all divorcing pairs in 2000) dissolve within less than ten years of marriage duration and in recent years this has increased. There is also a slight rise of proportion of person who divorce after 20 years of marriage duration (22 per cent). The risk of divorce is more than 4 times higher in urban than in rural areas. The unions of highly educated couples dissolve more often as compared with less educated ones.

In 2000, almost 42 thousand children under age of 18 experienced parents' divorce. The majority of them (56 per cent) were aged from 7 to 15 years; 11 per cent of children were under 3 years. The main reasons for divorce are *alcohol abuse, personal differences and unfaithfulness, incompatibility and mutual consent*).

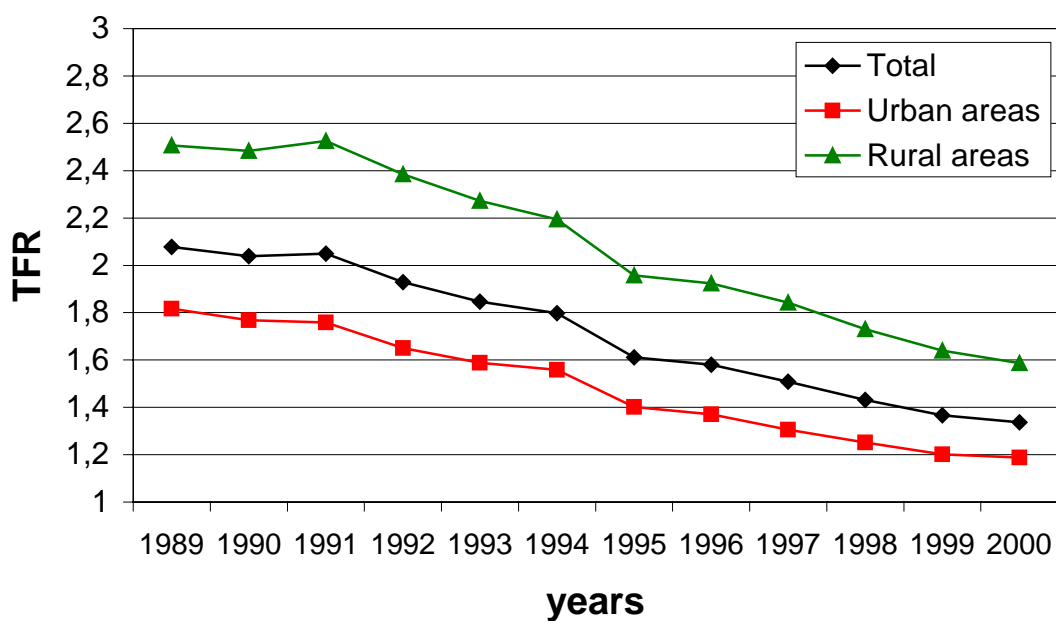
### **2.4. POLISH PATTERNS OF FERTILITY**

Since 1984 number of births has been systematically decreasing from the level of 723,6 to 378,3 thousand in 2000). The crude birth rate of 9,8 birth per 1000 population was the lowest in the post-war period. In 1989 the total fertility rate reached the below replacement levels of 2,08 and was systematically declining to only 1,34 in 2000 (*see figure 6*).

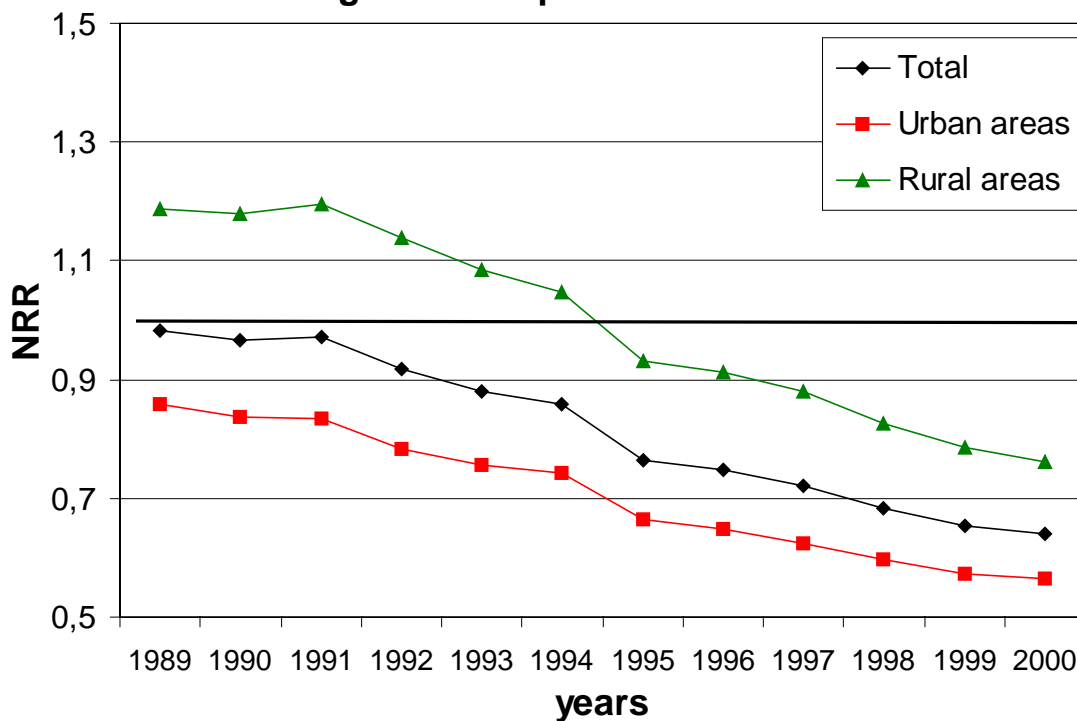
There is a strong negative impact of place of residence and educational level on the number of children born by females. In 2000, the average birth order among women living in cities amounted to 1,76 by the level of 2,13 in the case of rural women. Among females with tertiary education the mean birth was 1,6 while in the group of mothers with primary education - 2,4 (*see figure 7*).

The females' childbearing activity has been declining in almost all groups of age but in particular in the groups of 20-24 and 25-29 years. The reported changes of fertility have been leading to the Western patterns with peak in the age group 25-29. The number of live births among the youngest mothers (under 18) slightly increased in relative terms. In 1989, it amounted to 7435, i.e. 1,3 per cent of all births. After 11 years the similar figures were 5807 and 1,5 per cent respectively (*see figure 8*).

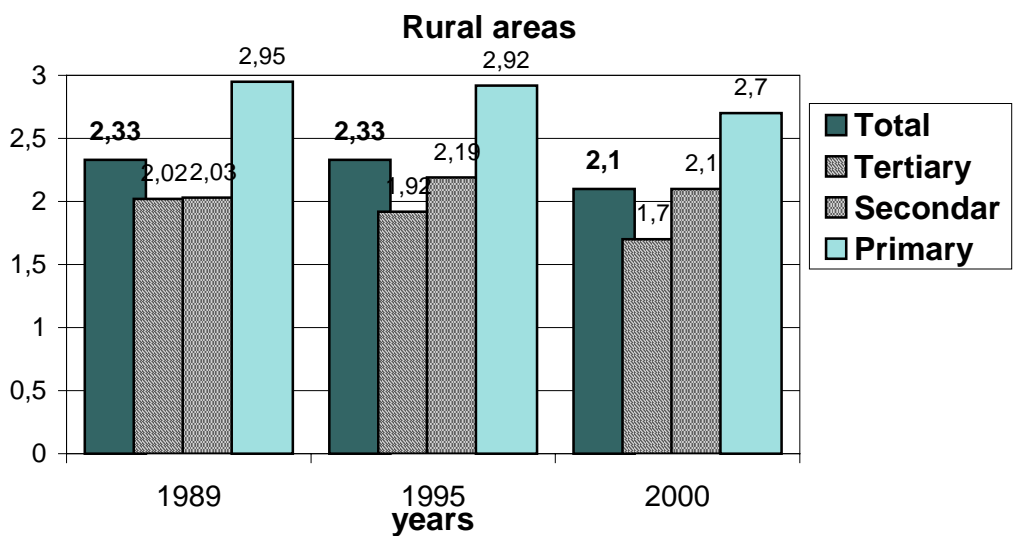
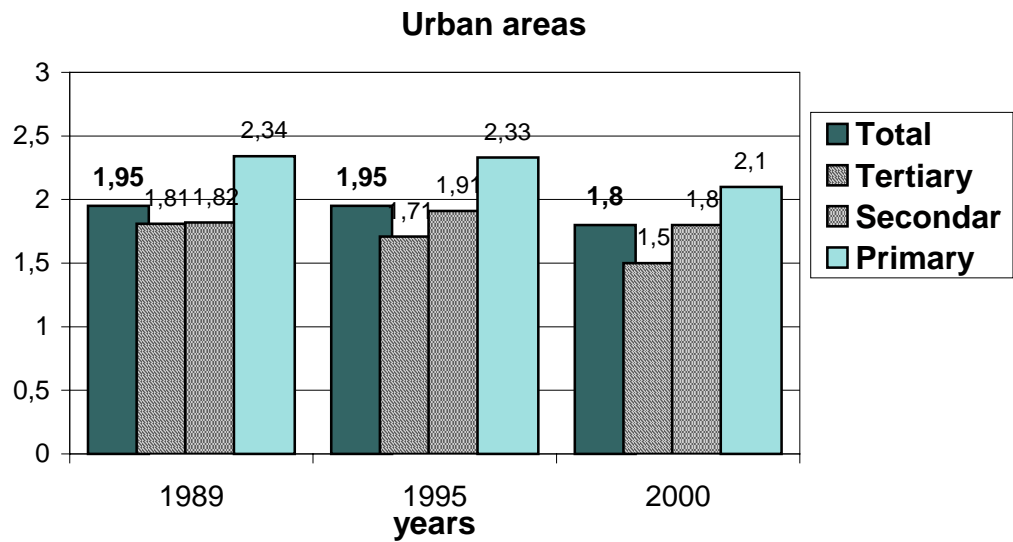
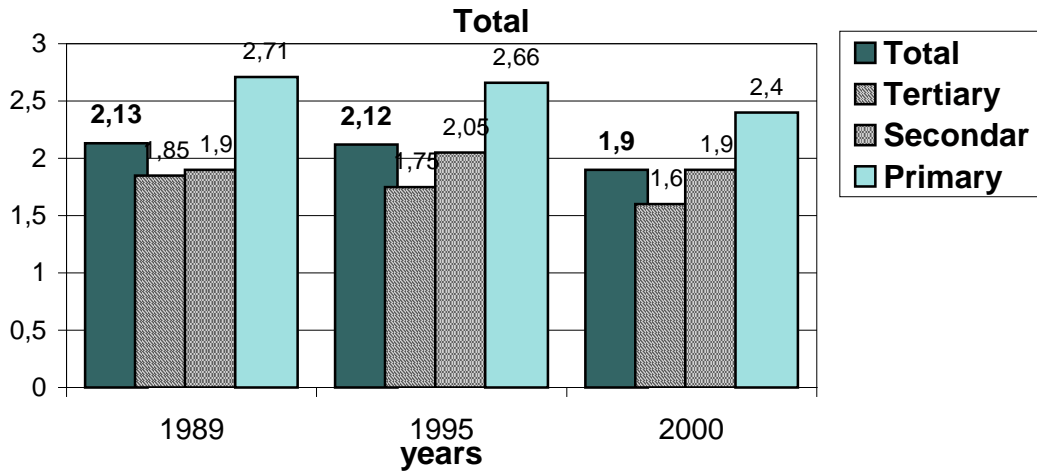
**Fig.6a. Total fertility rate. Poland, 1989-2000**

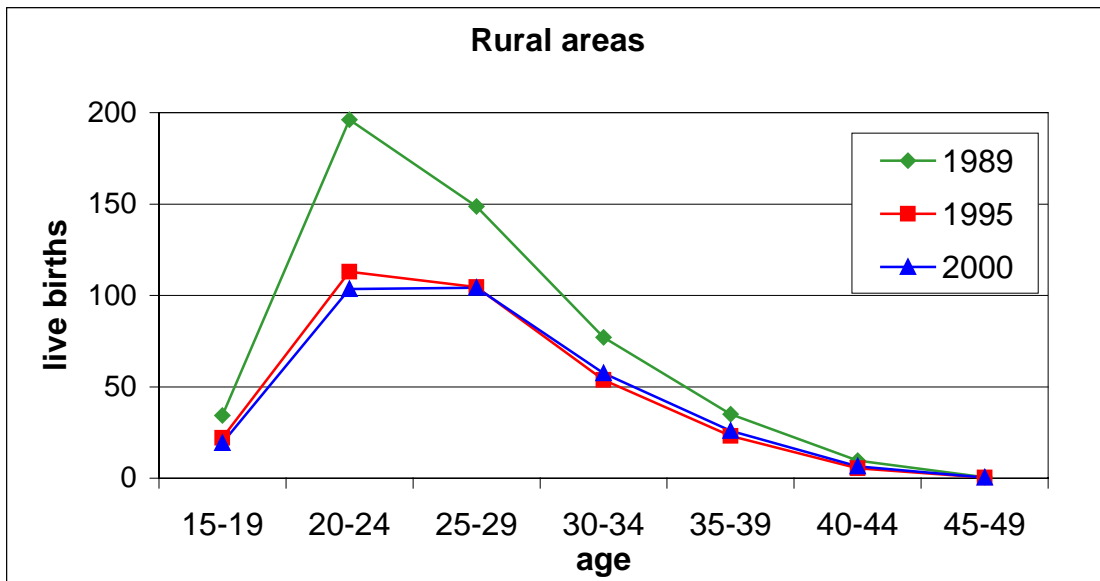
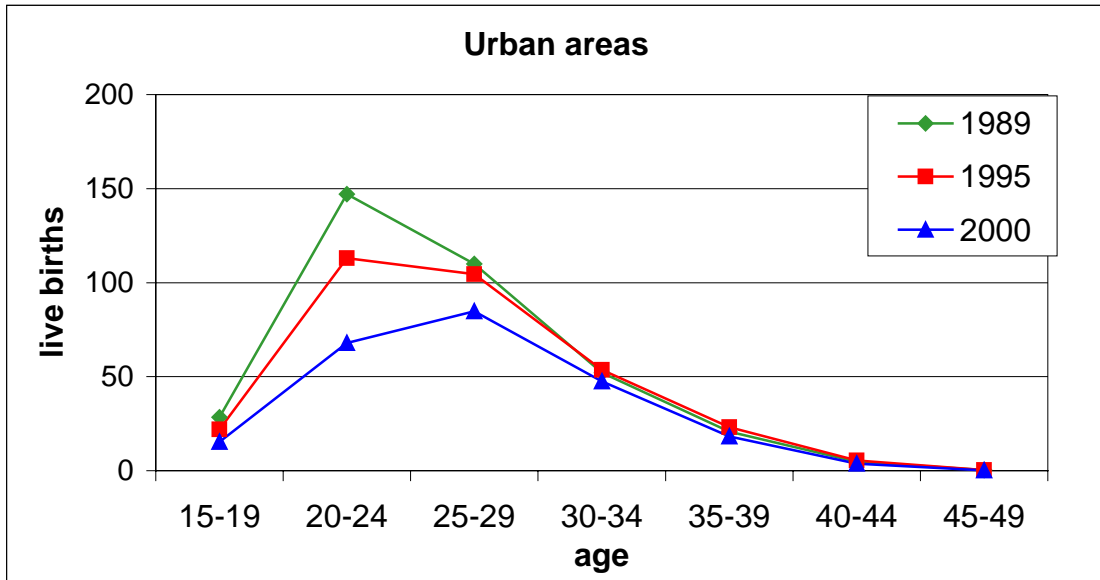
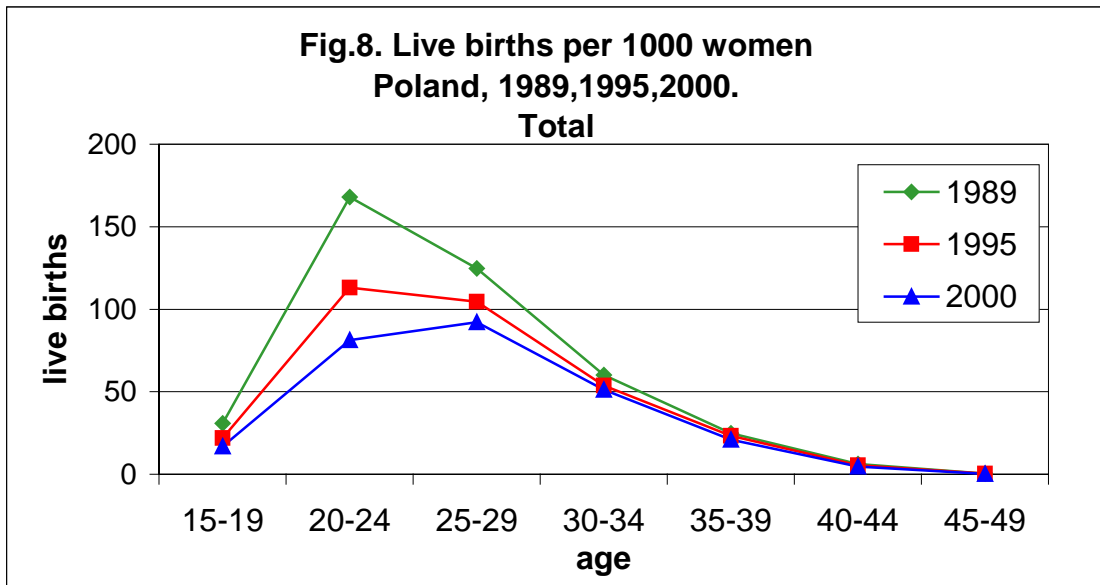


**Fig.6b. Net reproduction rate**



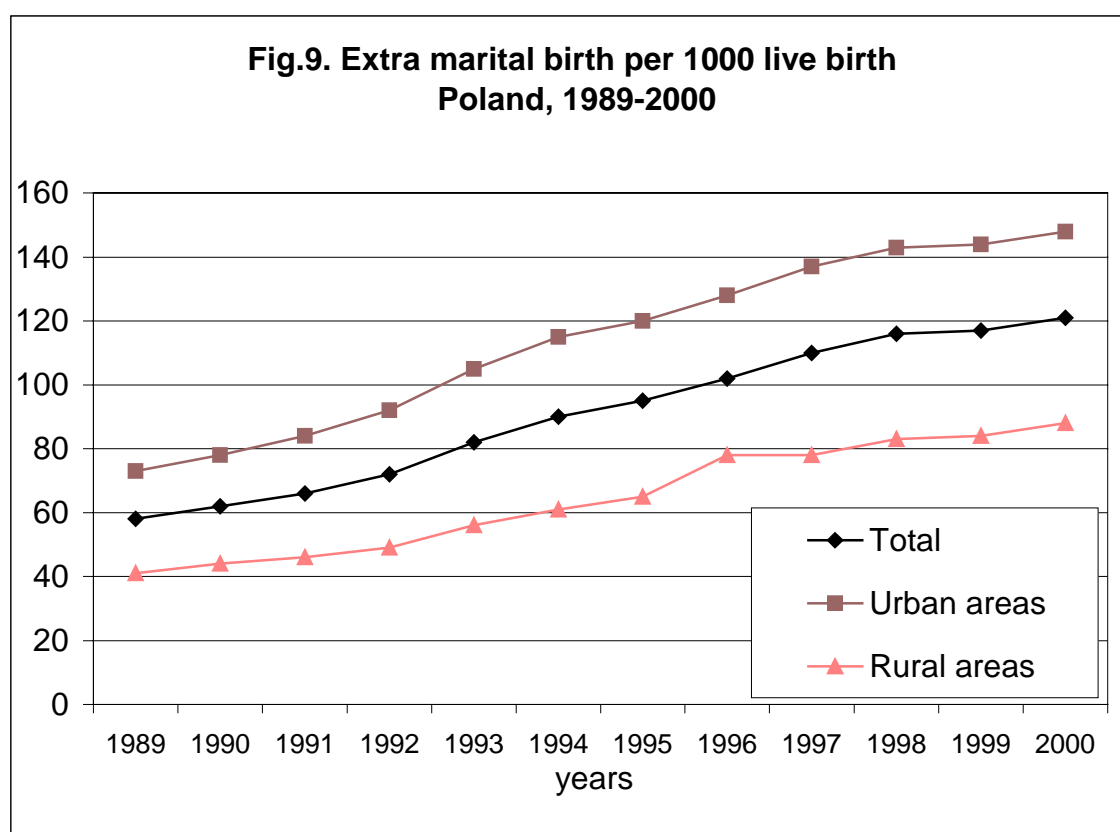
**Fig.7. Average birth order by education level  
Poland, 1989,1995,2000**





There are some socio-economic factors determining fertility decline. The growing number of students, high level of unemployment among younger groups, very high prices of dwellings limits the opportunity of family formation (Frątczak, 1999; Liefbroer, Frątczak 1996)). But it seems that there is also an impact of changes in the system of norms and values on the demographic behaviours and attitudes of younger cohorts.

In the recent years, more children are born outside marriage, though the level of extra marital birth in Poland is much lower as compared with the other European countries. In the 1960s and 1970s little more than 5 per cent of live births were illegitimate, in 2000 the frequency of these births reached the level of 12,1 per cent. The proportion in urban areas was higher (14,8 per cent) than in rural ones (8,8 per cent)-(see figure 9).

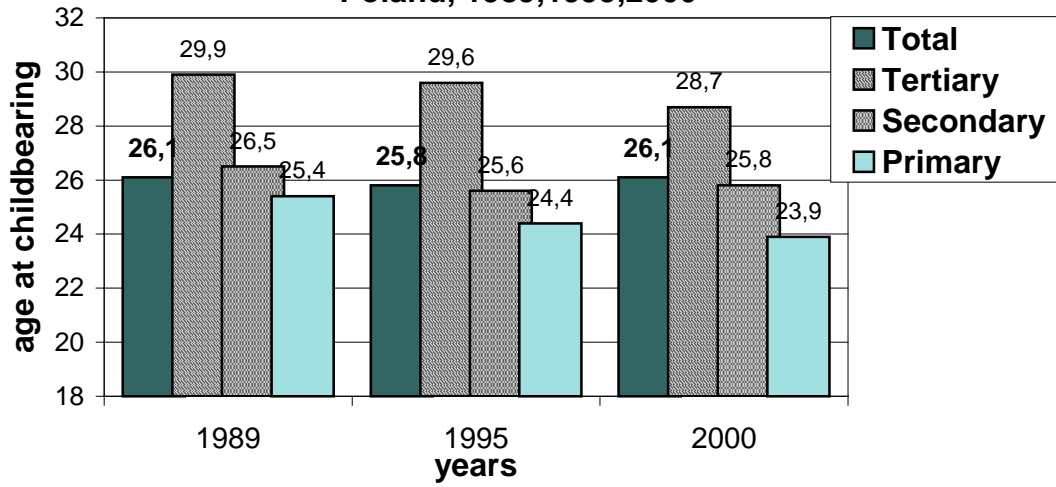


### ***Age at childbearing***

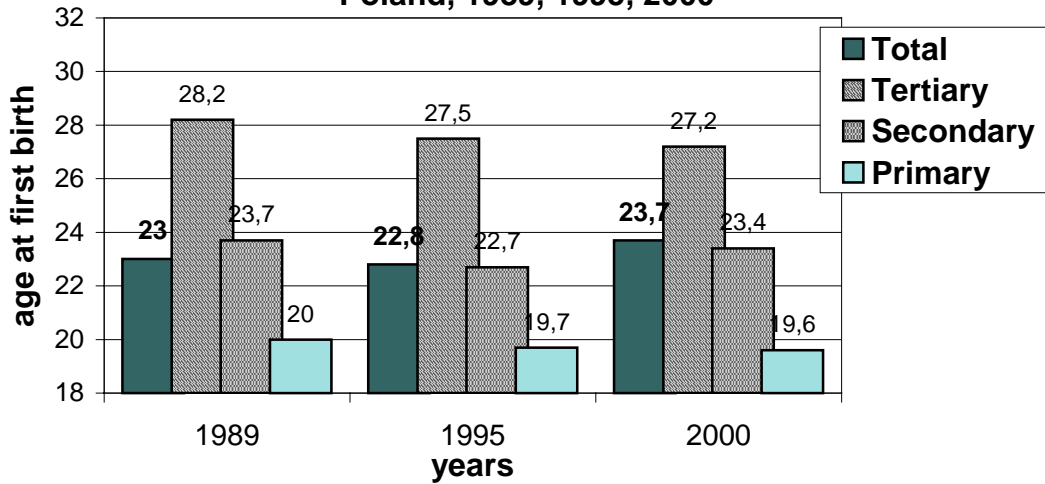
Polish mothers start their childbearing history relatively earlier as compared with women in the other developed countries (Kowalska Wróblewska 2001). In 2000, the average age for first childbearing was 23,7 years and varied significantly according to educational level. Every second women with primary education start her childbearing history at the age below 19,6 years, each second in the group of females with secondary and tertiary education - at the age below 23,4 and 27,2 years respectively (see figure 10).



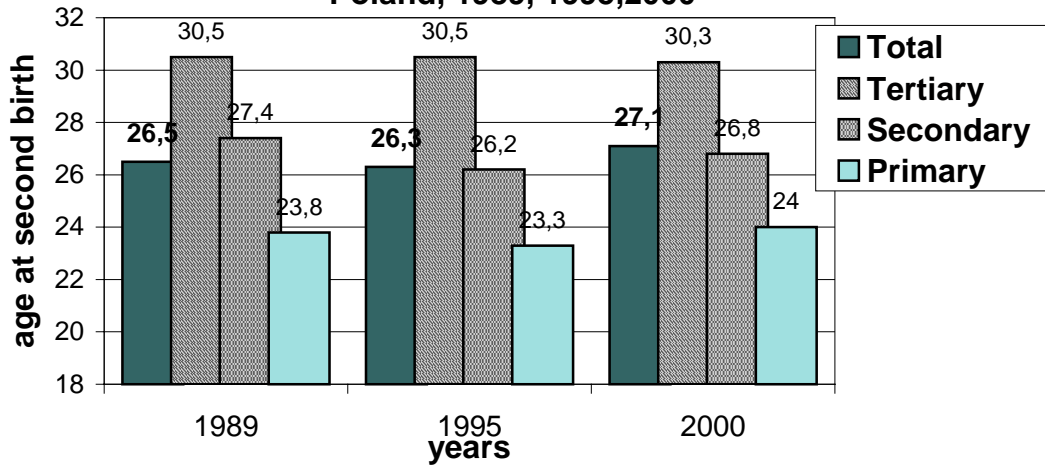
**Fig.10. Median age at childbearing by educational level  
Poland, 1989,1995,2000**



**Median age at first birth by educational level  
Poland, 1989, 1995, 2000**



**Median age at second birth by educational level  
Poland, 1989, 1995,2000**



## **2.5. MORTALITY**

The 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s were characterised by very unfavourable tendencies in mortality rates. This was the most evident in the group of male's aged 35-49; the considerable acceleration in various specific mortality rates has been noted in this group. The average life expectancy in Poland was typical for countries of Eastern and Central Europe, but relatively low in European terms. In 2000 it amounted to 69,74 years for males and to 78,00 for females, and increased during the recent five years of 3,1% for men and 2,1% for women. One of the positive phenomena of the demographic situation of post-war period is in Poland decrease in the infant mortality rate. It dropped to 8,1 per 1000 live births in 2000. Moreover Poland still belongs to the group of European countries which are characterised by a high infant mortality rate. The main reason of infant's deaths is prenatal mortality, and among children above one year - mortality caused by traumas and accidents, and due to malignant neoplasm. There is also steady drop of the share of infants with low birth weight (under 2500 grams) from 8,8 per cent in 1990 to 5,7 per cent in 2000.

## **3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF FAMILY LIFE**

### **3.1. EDUCATION**

The changes took place in Poland during transformation have greatly affected the quality of human capital, particularly intellectual capital. The process of privatisation also affected the education system, especially in higher education. In the 2000/2001 academic, 195 private colleges and universities operated within the total number of 310 higher-education institutions (GUS, Statistical Yearbook, 2001). At present, every third university student is at private school. Privatisation of schooling has also covered general secondary education.

Changes in the population structure by education are a positive phenomenon, which has been observed for several years so far. In 1995 (last available data from national micro census) 6,8 per cent of population aged 15 years and over had higher education, over 27 per cent completed secondary or post-secondary education, almost 26 per cent basic vocational and over 33 per cent primary education.

The structure of population by education varies for both sexes. Females usually have slightly better education background than males. There are also significant differences between urban and rural areas. Urban population is much ore better educated than rural population.

The positive changes in the structure of population by education are highly important as low level of education generates new unemployed persons, especially long-term unemployed, families living in poverty and social pathology. It also encourages marginalisation of selected social groups.

The 1990s saw significant increase in the number of youth in general secondary schools (more than 100 per cent), in post secondary schools (almost 100%) and in higher schools (almost 300 per cent). The relatively high number of young people continues their studies in secondary technical and vocational schools. Graduates of these schools often become unemployed: in 2000 the unemployment rates among such graduates amounted to 13,6 % and 19,2% respectively, and were higher for women (16,4% and 24,6%).

Table 3 shows the figures on educational enrolment in the period 1990-2000. They confirm the above-mentioned changes in the structure of pupils and students in Poland under socio-economic transformations.

Table 3. Gross ratio of educational enrolment, Poland, 1990-2000 (in percentages)

Educational level	Age groups	1990/91	1995/96	2000/2001
Pre-school	6	95,2	97,3	99,4
Primary	7-14	99,9	99,0	99,1
Secondary total	15-18	80,1	86,4	91,2
General secondary	15-18	18,9	26,3	43,6
Technical and vocational of which basic vocational	15-18	61,2	60,1	47,6
	15-18	34,5	27,8	14,0
Post-secondary	19-24	3,6	4,6	6,9
Tertiary	19-24	12,9	22,3	47,0

Source: Statistical Yearbook of The Republic of Poland, 2001, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 1998, p.224.

### *Youth culture*

Considerable changes in family structures and patterns of living in modern societies are affecting children either directly or indirectly. One of the observed changes is reproductive attitudes and behaviours. It is worth noting that the sexual life of young generations starts earlier than previously. According to 1996 survey, 24 per cent of girls and 35 per cent of boys, attending secondary schools, has already had the first sexual intercourse. The age of sexual initiation has been decreasing constantly. The average age to have the first sexual intercourse was 16,6 and to 16,8 for women aged 17-19, while for the persons aged 30-39 the level of mean was 19,1 and 19,7 respectively (Wróblewska 1998).

The young generation accepts liberal attitudes towards sex. Among persons aged 19, 18 per cent declared that one can have sex at will, 26 per cent stated that it is acceptable one likes the partner and only 7 per cent emphasised that it is acceptable when one is married.

People have become more responsible about making decisions to have children, due to the knowledge of contraceptive methods and availability of contraceptives on the market. The modern methods are not widespread, sterilisation is prohibited.

Sexual habits of Polish teenagers of the 1990s, their knowledge, attitudes and behaviours are, to a large extent, formed by the mass media culture, particularly by television and the press, which have taken over the roles of parents and teachers. The media stimulate still more widespread acceptance of early sexual activity and urge them to perceive sex in a spontaneous manner, based on feeling and experiences. Magazines and television constitute the main source of information on sex for more than a half of all the teenagers. Friends are the second most common source. Parents and school, even taken together, do not keep up with the media. Every second boy and four out of ten girls do not discuss sex problems with their parents. Sphere of sexuality is one of very important elements of teenage life, but it is not the only one. It is reflected by the intrinsic differences in attitudes, knowledge and behaviours of pupils who enjoy good note marks at school and the weal pupils. Less successful pupils showed the highest acceptance of sex. Contact with alcohol, drugs and cigarettes were also more frequent in this group.

One of the factors, which significantly influenced the expressed opinions and behaviours of students was their religiosity. The system of values and standards resulting from convictions and religious dimension help many teenagers in Poland to learn to control sexual instinct.

Special attention is focused on the very frequent contact of children and young people with production of pornographic nature. Data coming from various surveys show significant interdependence between contact with pornography and sexual behaviours of teenagers.

### **3.2. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF POLISH FAMILIES**

The recent years in Poland have brought permanent increase of the standard of living in Poland. However many families, in particular young and one-parent families, and those with many children are still living in very difficult conditions. Growth in poverty is very strongly related to unemployment and to poorly developed services.

#### ***Changes in the labour force***

From the beginning of the 1990s in Poland like in the majority countries of Eastern and Central Europe, remaining under the influence of economic and political reforms, and demographic changes, significant changes in the size and the composition of the labour force were observed (Sztanderska 1997; Witkowski 2000).

During this decade a decrease in employment and an increase in unemployment was seen. The number of employed decreased from 16485 to 15480 thousand; the number of registered unemployed increased from 1126 to 2703 thousand. The proportion of unemployed in the economically active population increased from 6,5% in 1990 to 15,1% in 2000.

Part of the unemployed comprised graduates of schools providing general education, higher educational establishment and vocational-training schools. They were not assigned to a job but were actively seeking one.

According to surveys of employment the increase of unemployment is more substantial in younger groups: 57 per cent of all unemployed are aged under 35, of which 30,5 per cent are at the age under 25. Unemployment rate among women is higher compared with men: 55,2 per cent and 44,8 per cent respectively. There is a great contradiction between motherhood and opportunity of finding a job by young women who have small children or plan childbearing. Since employees prefer young men who do not have any family or parental obligations there is much more difficult for a young woman to find a job than for a man and therefore unemployment rate among females is remarkable higher. The majority of unemployed is persons with primary (33,4 per cent) or with basic vocational education (37 per cent); 2,5 per cent of unemployed persons are graduates of universities.

The increasing number of long-term unemployed is especially serious. At the end of 2000, 45 per cent had been unemployed for more than 12 months. The share of long-term unemployed women was higher as compared with men (52,1 per cent and 35,5 per cent respectively).

The youngest generation is especially exposed to poverty, to worse conditions for education and health. Economic restructuring, though deemed necessary, has brought with it problems of rising prices of essential goods and services; the housing situation has further deteriorated. These factors determine to large extent the lower number of children and the postponement of marriage and childbearing.

#### ***Poverty***

In Poland the official poverty line is not clearly defined. There is an intention to pick up the social minimum as the official poverty line. It is defined on the basis of the standard quantities of goods determined by experts as necessary for normal life for an individual in the family.

Similar levels were defined in other Central and Eastern European countries. (Golinowska 1996; *Warunki życia...*2001).

The poverty that occurred in Poland on a wider scale in the transition period is not only due to lack of income, or other foundations of material existence, but is also culturally - and sometimes health-driven, and connected with social pathologies - primarily alcohol abuse.

Poverty is frequently analysed (Golinowska 1996) by dividing it into two types, based on its underlying cause. The first type is poverty independent on the individual, conditioned by the economic environment (growth rate), or the country or region's economic development; the second type is poverty dependent on the individual, sometimes termed as „quilt” poverty (life attitude, individual character). The first type predominated at the beginning of transition in Poland. The motivating factors included the outbreak of unemployment and low wages in failing and ineffective enterprises. Poverty also appeared among farmers. Large-scale poverty affected the workers of former state-owned farms and other rural residents, whose disposable consumption income shrank by half in real terms since the end of the 1980s.

A characteristic feature of the plunge on household income in the shock period was differentiation of attitudes. Alongside behaviour experiencing helplessness and attitudes of claims on employers and state institutions, entrepreneurial behaviours became visible - but some of these were in illegal and seamy legal activities.

While in the 1980s, survey respondents associated poverty largely with factors for which the individual could be blamed, such as lack of resourcefulness, alcoholism and lack of education, at the beginning of the 1990s more and more respondents were declining that the individual cannot be blamed for poverty. In the middle of the 1990s already 80% of survey respondents thought that poverty was caused by external factors.

At the end of the 1990s the range of the most acute poverty shrank. Under the minimum-subsistence criterion, the poverty rate increased to 8 per cent. This was because unemployment increased, wages went up and cash benefits were decreased for the long-term unemployed and the unemployed living in regions of high unemployment (only 20 per cent of all unemployed possess benefit rights. However, under other criteria, the poverty level did not change. This is explained by the increase in income gaps.

The picture of Polish poverty at the end of the 1990s was closer to that in Western countries than to the picture in other regions of the world. A vital feature of Polish poverty is that it affects young people and large families more than the elderly does. It affects residents of small towns and villages more than those of urban areas. Future social policy will determine whether children and young people remain proportionally harder hit by poverty than society as a whole or not.

Polish poverty is also connected to the structural problems of the economy, e.g. the high share of agriculture and the high degree of obsolescence in industry, and large spatial variations. This will hold true for many years to come.

### ***The threat to equal opportunities in education***

In the course of the transformation period, education and qualifications have proved to be the factors which have had the strongest influence on the shape of Polish social structure. The traditional divisions: the poor – the rich; the possessing access to power and information - the former deprived of such access, depend on the possession of education or a professions of parents (Nowak 1997).

Survey on poverty in Poland show a clear relation between the level of education and the strength of the household's economy. The higher level of education, the lower poverty of the family. The higher incomes and the higher education lead to higher expenditures on education, recreation and culture. Conversely, it is also evident that low income and low education are

strongly correlated with low expenditures on education and culture. The same correlation appears in the level of household compositions of durable goods, in the consumption of cultural goods as well as participation in cultural life. One may say, reach population becomes more reach, poor people – more poor.

In Poland, since 1989 there has developed a differentiation in expenditure on education and culture. In all household budgets (with the exception of households of persons operating as self-employed – private business people), the share of expenditures on education and culture has fallen since 1989. There has been particularly significant decrease especially in the families of workers, farmers (and thus where one finds the greatest number of children) and unemployed families – maintaining themselves by agriculture or unearned resources (i.e. unemployment or poverty benefits) those with parents of low educational attainment or qualifications, and those from large families and low incomes – are the most threatened in respect of equal access to education and cultural goods. The threat is made more severe, since such children generally suffer worse conditions at home and are, therefore, more poorly prepared for school. Moreover, they cannot take advantage of extra-curricular form of education because of the costs of such an education. Simultaneously, children from wealthy, educated, urban families increasingly benefit from supplementary forms of extra-curricular education, and from better-equipped and better quality schools.

The limitation of access to kindergarten education, arising from their transfer to the communes determine a significant rise in fees for kindergarten schooling and deprived large families, the poor and the unemployed from taking advantage of it. The conditions of kindergarten care developed disparities based on the wealth of the communes – the wealthy communes spent 3-4 times more per child in pre-school education than the poor. Permanent limitation on social help for poor youth has appeared. After 1989, budgetary funds for social help to pupils and students declined – state subsidies were withdrawn and changes to the tax system were not introduced. This has further caused limitation in access to education arising from a complex of attributes – place of residence, level of education and wealth of parents. The possibilities for education, but only to a small degree, are enhanced by the appearance of non-public schools in the smaller urban centres, which are closer to the students' homes and therefore more accessible.

#### **4. ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE FAMILY AND THE CHILD IN POLAND**

While discussing the topic and the role of marriage, family and child on the base of empirical studies which were conducted under the project *Fertility and Family Surveys in the countries of the ECE Region* as a part of project *Population Policy Acceptance* in the majority of European countries in the 1990s, one may state that Europeans seem to express positive and traditional attitudes in this regard. The family, in particular, is still considered the core of one's own life and the majority of respondents would like to witness a reinforcement of this institution at the social and political level. Poland is in the group of countries which support family to a very large extent (Holzer; Kowalska, 1997).

Empirical studies indicate that family life with child(ren) is highly appreciated in Poland as a basic for setting up households and establishing primary social relations. The overwhelming majority of Poles still consider the family to be absolutely central in their lives and most of them indicate that they would like to see the family as an institution reinforced at the social and political level. Marriage remains the fundamental form of partnership and continues to be the basis for family formation. Women feel particularly strongly about it. Four out of five women and three out of four men disagreed with statement that *marriage is an*

*outdated institution*. Comparisons across age groups suggest that the attitudes of younger males toward marriage are less favourable than those of their older counterparts.

In Poland the child is considered to be a substantial element in person's happiness. According to answers in *Fertility and Family Surveys*, Poles look for self-fulfilment in their family and in the relationship with their children. There are of course differences comparing the parents' opinions to those of childless people. Agreement with the values of parenthood is more frequent among parents but it is interesting to note, especially for childless people over 30, that the childless also appreciate children as a great satisfaction in life. Only 2 per cent of the interviewed persons do not plan to have children at all. While child-friendly attitudes do not vary according to age, there are some differences according to sex. Parenthood is considered to be a very significant factor in a woman's life and the statements regarding the importance of having children are stronger among women than among men.

Poles are also quite open-minded on the question of allowing a woman to raise a child as a single parent. Overall, 87 per cent of females and 80 per cent of males agreed with the statement: *If women wants to have a child as a single parent, and she does not want to have a stable relationship with a man, she should be able to have a child*. Support for this view is given more often among the youngest groups of respondents.

Discussion of the so-called second demographic transition in Western countries has pointed to changes in parental attitudes and behaviour toward children as one of the factors contributing to the recent decline in family size. Falling fertility in the 1960s and the 1970s coincided with the close of the era of the "child-king" and the start of a period of adult-centred preoccupation with self-fulfilment and the quality of the dyadic partner relationship. Children are still considered very important, but their position at the apex of the family pyramid can no longer be taken for granted.

To measure the extent to which these new ideas had taken root in Poland, the view on the following statements is noteworthy: *"it is the parents' duty to do their best for their children, even at the expense of their own well-being"* or *"Parents have lives of their own and should not be asked to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of their children"*. Overall, half of the Polish female and more than two out of five male respondents chose the first of the two statements. At all ages, Polish women were more likely than men to believe that parents should be prepared to give up things for their children. Among both sexes, however, support for this statement was clearly lowest in the youngest age group, suggesting that the attitudes of the younger generation may be shifting in favour of the fulfilment of the parents' expectations and life aspirations. Confirmation of this hypothesis will have to wait for future research.

About one out of eight respondents in Poland selected the second statement. Support for the view that *parents need not give up satisfaction of their own desires for their children* was quite constant across both age and sex. The extent of support for this statement differs considerably from comparable figures for other Western countries. Elsewhere, the share of people who believe that parents should be able to fulfil their own expectations and aspirations in life tends to be larger.

## **5. CHILD AND FAMILY POLICY IN POLAND**

The pro-family programme was considered a priority by the previous Polish government which was stressed in the Prime Minister's expose: *„The family is the foundation of the society, being the actual place where a person is brought up and where a person grows up. Introduction of the family-oriented policy is one of the most important objectives for me and for my government and I am not talking about any temporary measures, such as higher social*

*allowances. We need to change the entire system to support all factors contributing to durability of families, especially of those with many children and single mothers. Tax law has to be mentioned at this point as a very important element in the process. We want to ensure autonomy of Polish families and to guarantee parental influence on education and upbringing of their children”.*

The project of pro-family programme was accepted by Cabinet in November 1999. It was addressed to the family as to the smallest social unit in order to ensure a harmonious development of each family member and, on the other hand, to make an effort for the development of the society viewed as a community of families. In the past project of pro-family programme there was room for assistance to women and children. Incorporation of women’s issues in the pro-family programme allowed to introduce more complex measures addressed directly to all women in Poland: either to mothers and wives or single women, either to working women or to those who decided to work at home. The programme was focused on ensuring an adequate material status, taxation and allowances for single parents and for large families. Unfortunately, the new government elected in September 2001, started to reduce some previously implemented pro-family measures and it seems the new family programme will be formulated.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The family has inherent rights to fulfilment of the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, education and spiritual needs of its members. The care and protection of the family is primarily the responsibility of government. It should be respected as the first environment of children’s development and first educator of its children. Children’s experiences within the family are crucial to the development of social skills, educational attainment and a positive sense of identity, thereafter emphasis should be placed on promoting these experiences.

It seems that the priorities should be given to the following services related to the family life and childhood development:

- child care and educational issues in isolated rural areas and in the poorest families;
- home-based and community-based child care initiatives;
- undertaking of detailed research to enhance service planning and to obtain a more developed view of the needs and expectations of parents;
- developing innovative and flexible ways of meeting the changing needs of children and their families, working in partnership in the statutory, voluntary or private sectors;
- promoting flexible working hours for parents and enabling them to spend more time with child(ren);
- secure children from various threats, violence, cruelty and abuse.



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