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Profile

Introduction

The national life of the Polish people is in many ways characterized by cultural unity. To begin with, demographic shifts and other changes that occurred during and after World War II left the population of Poland ethnically homogenous to a large extent. Also, most of the people throughout the country speak the Polish language. In yet another social area of accord, the majority of the population is bound by a common religion—Roman Catholicism.¹



© Waqas Ahmed
Polish children in traditional clothes

After the communist regime in Poland fell in May 1989, the Polish people implemented democracy as a governing system. By the end of the 20th century, although it still retained historic ties with Eastern Europe, Poland became for the first time more aligned with the West.² The nation has gained security since joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1999, and it experienced economic growth after joining the European Union (EU) in 2004.³ Large areas of the body politic are still characterized by opposition, as seen in the rival factions of the Polish government that continue to vie for power. In addition, tensions exist between Poland and Russia, due to the possible placement of a U.S. missile base in Poland. Still, the nation has achieved a high degree of stability.

Geography

Poland is a relatively small country that includes slightly less territory than the U.S. state of New Mexico.⁴ Located in central Europe, it lies in a crossroads that links northwestern Europe to the Eurasian plains of Eastern Europe. Poland also links to the Baltic Sea, which leads to the shipping and trading lanes of the North Atlantic Ocean.⁵



© Giorgio Monteforti
Poland-Ukraine border at Wola Uhruska

Covering an area of over 312,679 sq km (120,726 sq mi), Poland lies east of Germany, sharing a border that is 456 km (283 mi) long. Poland's border with the Czech Republic

¹ Bartleby.com. The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. Poland. "Land and People." c. 2007. <http://www.bartleby.com/65/po/Poland.html>

² Encyclopædia Britannica. "Poland." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9108558>

³ The New York Times. Dempsey, Judy and Alison Smale. "President of Poland Is Sanguine on Economy." 11 March 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/12/world/europe/12poland.html?fta=y>

⁴ CIA World Factbook. "Poland." 4 September 2008. 23 April 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>

⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Poland." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9108558>

lies to the southwest (615 km, or 382 mi), and its border with Slovakia is directly south (420 km, or 261 mi). Poland borders Ukraine to the southeast (428 km, or 266 mi), Belarus to the east (605 km, or 376 mi), and Lithuania on the northeastern corner (91 km, or 56 mi). On its northern side, Poland shares a border of 432 km (268 mi) with Russia's Kaliningrad Oblast. Also to the north, the Baltic Sea stretches between Poland's land borders with Russia and Germany.⁶

Geographic Divisions and Topographic Features

The Polish land mass is marked by a range of geological features that are principally defined by rolling plains and lowlands. The average elevation of the country is approximately 173 m (568 ft) above sea level.⁷ In the south, the plains merge into uplands and hills, which in turn give way to a narrow strip of mountain ranges.



© Koos Fernhout
Lock Labedi in Gilwice canal, Poland

Baltic Coastal Plain

This lowland plain forms a narrow belt of sand dunes and swamps that is approximately 40–100 km (25–60 mi) wide. It runs adjacent to the shore of the Baltic Sea for a distance of nearly 491 km (305 mi).^{8,9} The coastline is punctuated by a few natural harbors, Pomeranian Bay in the west, and the Gulf of Gdańsk in the east.¹⁰ A large, semicircular indentation of the Baltic Sea, the Gulf of Gdańsk's western and southern sides border Poland, and its eastern side borders the Kaliningrad Oblast (Russia). Two long, thin peninsulas of land protrude into the gulf, the one on its southeastern side (the Vistula Spit) bisecting it. This low southeastern peninsula, 51 km (32 mi) long, connects Poland and the Kaliningrad Oblast.¹¹

Lakelands Belt

South of the Baltic coastal plain lies the Lakelands belt, composed of glacial drift, a mixture of sand, clay, gravel, and boulders. At its southern boundary, this terrain marks the southernmost extent of glacial activity from the ice age during which northeastern Poland and much of Europe were covered with ice.^{12,13} The northeastern section of this

⁶ CIA World Factbook. "Poland." 4 September 2008. 23 April 2009.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>

⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Land – Relief." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-256672>

⁸ MSN Encarta. Poland. "Land and Resources: Natural Regions." c. 1993–2009.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761559758/Poland.html#s2

⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Land – Relief." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-256672>

¹⁰ MSN Encarta. Poland. "Land and Resources: Natural Regions." c. 1993–2009.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761559758/Poland.html#s2

¹¹ MSN Encarta. "Gulf of Gdańsk." c. 1993–2009.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_762511192/gulf_of_gdansk.html

¹² Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Land – Relief." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-256672>

belt known as the Pojezierze Mazurskie lake district encompasses more than 2,000 lakes in an area of approximately 52,000 sq km (20,000 sq mi).¹⁴ It includes the Great Masurian Lakes, formed on a plateau that incorporates Poland's most concentrated region of lakes. Within this forested area, many of the lakes are linked to each other by canals and rivers.¹⁵

Central Lowlands

Farther south, the central lowlands were once characterized by the myriad of streams and runoff from the melting glaciers of the last ice age. Here, loamy deposits of soil were left to form the Polish heartland, a rich agricultural region.¹⁶ Today, some of the nation's largest cities are located here.

Southern Uplands

On their southern end, the central lowlands merge into the southern uplands, a kind of buffer zone between the lowlands and the mountains. Contoured in a series of basins, this region extends as far south as the northern edge of the Carpathian Mountains. Also called the Little Poland Uplands (Wyzyna Małopolska), this area is drained by the Vistula River and several of its tributaries. The region's topography was created by advancing glaciers and ice sheets; it includes forests, meadows, sand, and loess (wind-blown deposits) on which layers of rich soil are present. Mineral deposits are also found here, including one of Europe's richest bituminous coalfields on the western side of the uplands.^{17, 18}



© Nils van Rooijen
Rock formation on the
Poland/Czech border

Southern Mountains and Associated Features

The dominant mountains of southern Poland (and Eastern Europe) are the Carpathians, which run along Poland's southern border with Slovakia. Along with their associated chains and valleys, the Carpathians are considered one of Poland's most scenic regions. Deposits of natural gas, limited petroleum, sulfur, and salt are found in their basins, and one of their linked chains, the Tatra (Tatry) Mountains, contain the highest peaks within the Central Carpathians.^{19,20} Poland's highest mountain, Mt. Rysy, is

¹³ Poland for Visitors. Poland Travel Guide. "Great Masurian Lakes." No date. http://www.polandforvisitors.com/travel_poland/great_masurian_lakes

¹⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Masurian Lakeland." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9051344>

¹⁵ Poland for Visitors. Poland Travel Guide. "Great Masurian Lakes." No date. http://www.polandforvisitors.com/travel_poland/great_masurian_lakes

¹⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Land – Relief." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-256672>

¹⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Little Poland Uplands." 2009. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_762511192/gulf_of_gdansk.html

¹⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Land – Relief." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-256672>

¹⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Land – Relief – The Carpathians." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28226>

²⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Tatra Mountains." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9071390>

part of this range and lies on the Polish-Czech border. It rises to an elevation of 2,499 m (8,199 ft).²¹

Running along Poland's southwestern border with the Czech Republic are the rugged Sudeten (Sudety) Mountains, whose peaks reach heights of 1,602 m (5,256 ft). A variety of minerals and granite quarries are found in the area. In particular, an industry centered in and near the city of Walbrzych has formed around the mining and processing of coking coal.²² The region also includes secluded spas and health resorts where many people travel to relax and benefit from the remote environment.²³

Climate

In western Poland, the climate is influenced by moderate, coastal weather patterns. Eastern Poland's climate is more severe, subject to humid continental conditions. Here, frigid polar air from Russia or Scandinavia mixes with subtropical air masses that arrive from the south. Much of the time, the weather throughout the country is wet or cloudy, and during winter, the weather is variable.^{24, 25}



© ctosee2sea / flickr.com
Rainy day in summer, Poland

Officially there are four seasons in Poland, but traditionally people include two more seasons: pre-spring (*przedwiosnie*) and pre-winter (*przedzimie*). These latter two seasons have their own specific weather patterns. Winter, beset with snow, lasts 1–3 months or more, with temperatures in the period between November and March falling below zero. Winter is followed by the pre-spring of 1–2 months duration in which weather conditions of both spring and winter appear alternately. The next season is spring, often sunny, followed by a rainy and warm summer. Autumn, too, is warm and sunny. The last season in the cycle, Poland's pre-winter, is humid and foggy, signaling the advent of winter. The country's average mean temperature is 5–7°C (41–44°F) in parts of the Lakelands belt and 8–10°C (46–50°F) in the central lowlands and sub-Carpathian basins. Average yearly precipitation is 400–750 mm (15.7–29 in), with most of the rain falling in summer.^{26, 27}

Rivers

²¹ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Malopolskie." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-253136>

²² Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Land – Relief – The Sudeten." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28225>

²³ TravelPoland.com. "Poland Spa." c. 2000–2006. <http://www.travelpoland.com/poolandspa/>

²⁴ MSN Encarta. Poland. "Climate." c. 1993–2009. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761559758_2/Poland.html

²⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Land – Climate." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28228>

²⁶ AsiaRooms.com. "Weather and Climate in Poland." c. 2009. <http://www.asiarooms.com/poland-travel-guide/polandweather.html>

²⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Land – Climate." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28228>

Most of the area within Poland drains northward into the Baltic Sea, approximately one third by way of the Oder (Odra) River and half via the Vistula (Wisła) River.²⁸ The Vistula is Poland's longest river (1,090 km, or 675 mi).²⁹

It begins in southern Poland on the northern slope of the Carpathian Mountains, briefly flows north, then shifts to the northeast. It switches back to the north, veers sharply to the west just past Warsaw, and then turns north again, creating a delta as it empties into the Baltic Sea at the

Gulf of Gdańsk. Almost the entire river is navigable by small craft. The Oder River, Poland's second longest, begins in the Czech Republic, flowing northeast and then turning north into Poland. It shifts direction to the northwest and traces a section of Poland's border with Germany before it empties into the Baltic Sea. The total distance of the Oder River is 912 km (567 mi).³⁰



The Vistula River has several tributaries. In the southern uplands, close to the point where the Vistula switches direction from northeast to north, it receives the waters of a major tributary, the San River. Rising in the Carpathian Mountains on the border between Poland and Ukraine, the San River follows the Polish-Ukrainian border for a distance of approx. 50 km (31 mi). It then flows northwest to meet the Vistula River, its total length close to 433 km (269 mi).³¹ Farther north, just past Warsaw, the Vistula River receives the waters of another of its main tributaries, the Bug River, which rises east of L'viv in Ukraine. It follows the Polish border north as far as Brest in Belarus and then turns toward the west, flowing into Poland. Near Warsaw, it joins the Vistula River, its total length approximately 860 km (530 mi).³² The Vistula River also connects by way of the Bydgoszcz Canal to the Noteć River, located in central western Poland.³³ With a total length of 388 km (241 mi), the Noteć is a tributary of western Poland's Warta River, itself a tributary of the Oder River, which the Warta meets at the Polish-German border.³⁴
35

²⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Land – Drainage and Soils." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28227>

²⁹ MSN Encarta. "Wisła." c. 1997–2009. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761554153/Wis%C5%82a.html

³⁰ MSN Encarta. "Odra." c. 1997–2009. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572507/Odra.html

³¹ Poland Research Guide. "San River." 1 April 2009. <http://www.123exp-geography.com/t/18624184917/>

³² MSN Encarta. "Bug River." c. 1997–2009. [http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761574184/Bug_\(river\).html](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761574184/Bug_(river).html)

³³ IntraSea.org. "Inland Waterways – Poland." No date. <http://www.intrasea.org/downloads/National%20Paper%20Poland.pdf>

³⁴ AdventurePoland. "River Notec." c. 2004–2006. http://www.adventurepoland.com/river_notec.htm

³⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Warta River." 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/636181/Warta-River>

High water occurs in the nation's rivers twice each year. During the spring, water from melting snow floods the rivers in the lowland areas. Again during summer, heavy rainfall swells the rivers to their maximum depth.³⁶

Major Cities

Warsaw^{37, 38}

Warsaw, capital of Poland, is also its largest city (the population was 1,690,821 as of 2004).³⁹ It lies next to the Vistula River in central Poland, and is the Mazovia region's administrative center, as well as a political, industrial, and cultural center for the entire country.



© Tony Spencer
Old Town Market, Warsaw

Because of its historical and cultural evolution, Warsaw holds an eminent place among European cities. Where Warsaw now stands, settlements existed as early as the 11th century, even though the present city did not come into being until later, developing around a 13th-century castle. Warsaw became capital of Poland in 1596, although at different times it was taken by the Swedes, the Russians, and the Prussians. In 1915, it fell to the Germans, who also occupied it in 1939–1945, destroying over 90% of the city in the process.⁴⁰ The Polish government reconstructed and restored the old, historic section of the city at the end of the famous thoroughfare called the Royal Way (*Trakt Królewski*, known as *Krakowskie Przedmieście* in Old Town). On this boulevard lies the residence of the Polish president, the reconstructed Royal Castle, and a statue of the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus. Other famous people associated with Warsaw include Frédéric Chopin, a classical composer who studied in the city, and the physicist Marie Curie, who was born there. The city is home to many educational and research institutions, libraries, art galleries, and museums.

Kraków⁴¹

Kraków, with a population close to 758,000 (using 2004 data), lies in southern Poland, next to the Vistula River.⁴² It is a manufacturing center, with one of the largest iron



© Wojciech Oracz
Main Market Square, Kraków, Poland

³⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Land – Drainage and Soils." 2009 28227

³⁷ MSN Encarta. "Warsaw." c. 1993–2009. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761560771/Warsaw.html

³⁸ Bartleby.com. The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001–2007. <http://www.bartleby.com/65/wa/Warsaw.html>

³⁹ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Poland." January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

⁴⁰ MSN Encarta. "Warsaw." c. 1993–2009. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761560771/Warsaw.html

⁴¹ Bartleby.com. The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. "Kraków." 2001–2007. <http://www.bartleby.com/65/kr/Krakow.html>

⁴² Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Poland." January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

and steel manufacturing plants in Eastern Europe located nearby. Manufactures include chemicals and textiles as well as metals and machinery.

Kraków was founded in 700, much earlier than Warsaw. In 1320, it became the home of Polish kings, who were both crowned and buried there until the 1700s. The city became part of Austria in 1795, when Poland was partitioned for the third time. Not until 1919 did the city become part of Poland again.

Learning institutions in Kraków include Jagiellonian University, where the famed astronomer Copernicus studied. Founded in 1364, it remains one of Europe's leading centers of learning. Other cultural landmarks in the city include the royal Wawel castle and Gothic cathedral, rebuilt in the 1500s and 1300s respectively, around 50 other old churches, and centuries-old remains of the old city.

Łódź^{43, 44}

Only slightly larger than Kraków, Łódź has a population of just over 776,000 (2004 data).⁴⁵ It is the home of Poland's cotton textile industry, which—along with other industries—stimulated the city to grow from a population of around 800 in 1820, to 500,000 by 1913.⁴⁶ To build it as a textile center, the Polish government invited foreign artisans and weavers to settle here in 1820, and mills were established in 1830. Łódź is also important for its manufacture of radios, paper, metals, and chemicals.



After the city's founding in 1423, Łódź became part of Prussia, then reverted to Russia, which had become a large market for manufactures that the city produced. In 1919, it was restored to Poland. During World War II, however, Łódź was subjected to German occupation, during which the city was largely stripped of its identity and renamed Litzmannstadt.

Very few buildings or institutions reflective of old-style Polish architecture are present in Łódź because of its late development, which was primarily based on industry. Several learning institutions are located here, and it is a railway transportation center. It is famous as the national home of the Polish film industry, having graduated directors such as Roman Polanski and Andrzej Wajda.

⁴³ Bartleby.com. The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. "Łódź." 2001–2007. <http://www.bartleby.com/65/lo/Lodz.html>

⁴⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Łódź." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9048730>

⁴⁵ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Poland." January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

⁴⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Łódź." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9048730>

Wrocław ⁴⁷

Wrocław lies along the Oder River in the Silesia region of southwestern Poland. With a population of 636,854 (based on 2004 statistics), it is Poland's fourth largest city.⁴⁸ It is also the main industrial center for its region, housing textile mills, heavy machinery and metalworking plants, and an electronics industry. It is also an important communications center, with river transportation and international railway links.



Although the site that Wrocław now occupies was likely settled as early as the Stone Age, the city did not form until the 10th century. It initially grew as a major amber trading crossroads that linked Baltic Sea shipping routes to the Roman Empire, and Black Sea routes to Western Europe. In 1138, Wrocław became Silesia's first capital. When the Mongols invaded in 1241, they destroyed much of the city.

Also in the 13th century, many Germans immigrated to Wrocław after they were invited by local authorities, and the city adopted a constitution that was steeped in German law. Eventually, the city became a part of Germany, but dramatic change followed. After World War II, Wrocław once again became part of Polish territory. Most of the population also reverted to Polish as Germans fled west to their own country or were later evacuated. Also after the war, when most of the city's industrial and residential sections were badly damaged or destroyed, reconstruction efforts began to restore the city. It is now a scientific and cultural center, with theaters and music centers, museums, and gardens. Wrocław hosts one of Poland's most important musical events, known as the "Jazz on the Oder Festival," and in 2006 the city was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

⁴⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Wrocław." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9077571>

⁴⁸ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Poland." January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

Gdańsk⁴⁹

Gdańsk lies on the Baltic Sea at the mouth of the Vistula River, in north-central Poland. The city has two port sections, and the newer one receives petroleum shipments and exports coal. The older port contains shipyards and is an industrial center for timber mills and chemical, metallurgical, and food-processing plants. In 1980, labor unrest in the shipyards led to the formation of Solidarity, a union that became a significant influence on the

political history of Poland. Gdańsk is also a center of culture, with important educational institutions including medical schools, a maritime museum, theaters, and an opera house.



Gdańsk was founded around the end of the 10th century. During the European Renaissance, it was the Baltic Sea's wealthiest port. By 1754, it was Eastern Europe's largest city, with much of its economic growth and activity based on grain exports.

In the 17th century, Gdańsk began to decline, first as a result of the Swedish Wars that took place, and later, as a result of Prussian aggression that virtually ruined its trade. It achieved Polish governance between 1919 and 1939 under the Treaty of Versailles. When Poland refused to give the city to Germany upon Hitler's demand in 1938, Germany used the refusal as a reason to attack Poland, and thus World War II began. Like most of Poland's other major cities, Gdańsk was badly damaged in the war but was later restored.

History

Early and Middle History

Poland's written history begins in 966 C.E., when its ruler Mieszko I proclaimed Christianity for his kingdom.^{50, 51} The Polish state had to repeatedly fight invaders, including Balts, Germans, Romans, and Mongols during the Piast dynasty. It was also during this time that German colonization of Polish territory began, and a large Jewish population, fleeing persecution from countries in western Europe, settled in the country.



Recovering from the internal chaos of invasion, the Polish state became the largest and arguably strongest European state by the mid 1500s. Most of its power accrued during the Jagiellon dynasty (the second dynasty ruled by Polish kings), which began after the

⁴⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Gdansk." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9036271>

⁵⁰ C.E. = Common Era, which corresponds to A.D. = *Anno Domini*

⁵¹ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Background Note: Poland. "History." January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

country united with Lithuania in 1386 and lasted to 1572. During this period, all levels of the nobility as well as the landed gentry gained and solidified power, while the peasant class became weaker.^{52, 53, 54}

Polish Decline and Partition

The Polish monarchy declined during the next two centuries as a result of wars with Russia, Sweden, and the Ottomans. The expanding Russian Empire in particular began a political and military offensive in the early 18th century, and in 1764 forced Poland to enthrone a king who was a close ally of Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia. This move began a chain of events that led to the first partition of Poland in 1772, in which Polish territory was granted to Prussia, Austria, and Russia.⁵⁵



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Stanisław August, King of Poland
1764 - 1795

Even though the country had lost significant power and territory, the Polish state made some cultural gains in the years that followed the first partition. A period of national revival ensued, which planted the seeds for revolt against foreign domination during the 18th and 19th centuries. It was during this time that its educational system was modernized and secularized. Also, struggle began after 1772 over the issue of constitutional reform, which was promoted by the gentry but overruled by the nobility.⁵⁶

A second partition of Polish territory concluded in 1793, leaving only a part of central Poland independent. In 1795, the final partition was finalized, eliminating the Polish state entirely as it left Polish territory divided among Russia, Austria, and Prussia. Russia retained the most control (approximately half). Foreign countries continued to rule Poland for well over a century. The Polish people not only lost their territory, they lost civil liberties and much of their culture, including artistic and literary treasures that were taken from the country. In the mid 19th century, the Russians curtailed use of the Polish language in schools in favor of the Russian language. The Russian section of Poland became little more than an extension of the Russian Empire, and in the Prussian section policies designed to Germanize the population were put into place. Only the Austrian

⁵² Encyclopædia Britannica. "Poland." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9108558>

⁵³ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Background Note: Poland. "History." January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

⁵⁴ MSN Encarta. Poland. "The Piast Dynasty" and "The Jagiellonian Dynasty." c. 1993–2009. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761559758_10/Poland.html

⁵⁵ MSN Encarta. Poland. "Wars and Polish Decline" and "Partitions of Poland." c. 1993–2009. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761559758_10/Poland.html

⁵⁶ MSN Encarta. Poland. "Partitions of Poland." c. 1993–2009. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761559758_10/Poland.html

section of Poland introduced more liberal policies that allowed the Polish people to develop a somewhat more independent political life.^{57, 58}

The 20th Century, War, and Independence

World War I (1914–1918) signaled Poland’s return to sovereignty. It did not begin well in this respect, with Polish forces drafted into both the armies of the Russian Empire and the opposing Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria). However, Germany and Austria ceded Poland’s right to provisional independence in 1916, and after the Russian Empire fell in 1917, Russia’s new government supported Polish self-determination. Poland became an independent republic in November 1918. In accordance with the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, Poland gained back much of its territory as well as access to the Baltic Sea.^{59, 60}

During the 1920s and 1930s, Poland was preoccupied with balancing itself politically between Germany, the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.), and the European powers. It refused to allow its territory to be used as a passage for Soviet troops en route to Germany, where conflict was on the horizon. Battle lines were being drawn as the Soviet Union and Germany signed a pact of nonaggression, which included secret provisions to partition Poland. At



the same time, Poland allied with England, concluding the treaty in 1939. Just over a week later, and after the Polish government refused to cede Gdańsk to Germany, Germany invaded. Poland was again partitioned as World War II raged across Europe.⁶¹ Although the Polish people organized an active underground resistance movement, the nation suffered tremendously over the next few years. Approximately 6 million Poles died in the war, and German forces deported around 2.5 million to labor camps in Germany. The Polish Jewish population declined in number from over 3 million before the war to around 100,000 afterwards.⁶² Countless Polish cities lay in ruins. Warsaw, in particular, was “leveled” by the Germans when they retreated in January 1945.⁶³

⁵⁷ Bartleby.com. The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. “Poland, Partitions of.” 2001–2007. <http://www.bartleby.com/65/po/Poland-P.html>

⁵⁸ MSN Encarta. Poland. “Partitions of Poland” and “Poland Under Foreign Rule.” c. 1993–2009. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761559758_10/Poland.html

⁵⁹ Bartleby.com. The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. “The Restoration of a Nation.” 2001–2007. <http://www.bartleby.com/65/po/Poland.html>

⁶⁰ MSN Encarta. Poland. “Independence.” c. 1993–2009. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761559758_11/Poland.html

⁶¹ Bartleby.com. The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. “The Restoration of a Nation.” 2001–2007. <http://www.bartleby.com/65/po/Poland.html>

⁶² Bartleby.com. The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. “World War.” 2001–2007. <http://www.bartleby.com/65/po/Poland.html>

⁶³ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Background Note: Poland. “History.” January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

Post World War II

Influenced by the Soviet Union, a communist government emerged in Poland. It was led by Bolesław Bierut, who was Polish, but also a Soviet citizen. The Polish constitution established in 1952 set forth Poland's status as a people's republic, its government and later its foreign policy modeled after that of the Soviet Union. In 1968, Poland joined with forces of the Soviet Union and countries in Eastern Europe to invade Czechoslovakia. Recession accompanied by social and economic instability followed, resulting from a growing burden of debt and inefficiency in central economic planning. Strikes, spiraling prices, and food shortages continued through the next decade.^{64, 65}



The Solidarity Movement

Solidarity, an extremely popular, but at first illegal, labor union, organized strikes in 1980 around demands that wages be raised and consumer prices be lowered. Union demands also included ending censorship and granting workers the right to strike. In 1982, Solidarity was banned, but by 1989 it had regained legal status. That year, the union helped to negotiate political reforms that paved the way for free elections and Solidarity's strong representation and influence in Parliament.⁶⁶

Also in late 1989, the transformation of Poland's economy began, moving from central planning to free market. The government renamed the nation the Republic of Poland and demoted the role of the Communist Party, which dissolved in 1990. It was replaced by the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland. Lech Wałęsa became president, the first to be elected by popular referendum.⁶⁷

The Republic of Poland and Recent Events

Solidarity Party's popularity waned in the decade of the 1990s as economic problems continued to undermine the country. However, free elections continued, with power transferring constitutionally. Poland joined NATO in 1999 and supported the U.S. and Britain in the Iraq War, sending 60 combat soldiers and other troops, and leading



⁶⁴ Bartleby.com. The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. "The Communist Regime." 2001–2007. <http://www.bartleby.com/65/po/Poland.html>

⁶⁵ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Background Note: Poland. "Communist Party Domination." January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

⁶⁶ Bartleby.com. The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. "Solidarity and a Multiparty State." 2001–2007. <http://www.bartleby.com/65/po/Poland.html>

⁶⁷ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Background Note: Poland. "Roundtable Talks and Elections." January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

a multinational force to stabilize Iraq in 2003. Poland withdrew its troops from Iraq in 2005.^{68, 69}

In 2004, Poland joined the European Union (EU), indicating an ongoing “successful postcommunist transition” even in the face of continuing political struggles. In 2008, against pressure from Russia, Poland agreed to allow the U.S. to install an anti-missile system on Polish territory, to be used defensively. Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski and former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice signed the agreement on 20 August 2008, with the understanding that the system would be operational by 2012.^{70, 71}

Economy

*Overview and Perspective*⁷²

Poland had a free-market, primarily agricultural economy before World War II. In the 1940s, the communists took power and installed a command (centrally planned) economy similar in design to that of the Soviet Union. Its emphasis was industrial, and it functioned mainly within the domain of the Soviet-dominated countries of the Eastern bloc. By the 1980s, the Polish economy was in crisis as a result of its run-down industrial infrastructure, inefficient production combined with high subsidies, severe inflation, and ongoing deficits.



Communism in Poland fell, and movement began toward stabilizing the economy and lowering inflation by slowly adopting a market economy. The government eliminated price controls, froze wages, and gradually did away with subsidies for enterprises owned by the state. As a result of these steps, gross domestic product (GDP) initially dropped as unemployment increased, but both later turned around and began to show progress. A middle class emerged in the cities, consisting mainly of professionals, entrepreneurs, and small business owners. Inflation began to recede in the 1990s, and Poland’s economy became one of the strongest in the Eastern bloc even though it was weakened in 2003 by a worldwide economic downturn. The global recession taking place in 2008–2009 has

⁶⁸ Infoplease.com. Poland. “History: The Demise of the Solidarity Party.” c. 2000–2009. <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107891.html>

⁶⁹ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Background Note: Poland. “The Republic of Poland.” January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

⁷⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. “History – Poland in the 20th Century – The Constitution of 1997.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-256695>

⁷¹ Infoplease.com. Poland. “History: The Demise of the Solidarity Party.” c. 2000–2009. <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107891.html>

⁷² Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. “Economy.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28242>

adversely affected the Polish economy, but “without the kind of serious damage” that has appeared in surrounding countries, according to Poland’s president.⁷³

Industry

After privatization of industry that began in the early 1990s, industrial growth eventually began to stabilize, although restructuring of the railroad and energy industries has shown little progress. Reforms initially led to a period of consumer goods shortages in conjunction with the high unemployment and inflation, but this was followed by developments in the industrial sector that stimulated production.⁷⁴ Industry today in Poland is centered around machine building, iron and steel production, shipbuilding, and mining. The country also has automobile and food producing industries and it manufactures chemicals, textiles, and glass.⁷⁵



© Tobiasz Koprowski
Cargo ship in Gdańsk, Poland

Exports and Imports

Since 2004 when Poland joined the European Union, exports have driven growth in Poland.⁷⁶ Poland’s main exports include coal, cars, ships, machinery, furniture, and food. Exports were valued at USD 190.5 billion for 2008 (est.). In 2007, Poland’s top export partner was Germany (25.9%). Others included Italy, France, the U.K., the Czech Republic, and Russia, all falling between 4 and 7%.^{77, 78}



© bk86a / flickr.com
Wieliczka Salt Mine, Poland

Imports were valued at slightly over USD 158 billion for 2007.⁷⁹ Products imported include crude oil, fuels, minerals, car parts and machinery, pharmaceuticals, and computers. Poland’s highest import source is Germany (29%); the next highest source is

⁷³ The New York Times. Dempsey, Judy and Alison Smale. “President of Poland Is Sanguine on Economy.” 11 March 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/12/world/europe/12poland.html?_r=1&fta=y

⁷⁴ Bartleby.com. Poland. “Economy.” 2001–2007. <http://www.bartleby.com/65/po/Poland.html>

⁷⁵ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Background Note: Poland. “Economy.” January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

⁷⁶ The New York Times. Dempsey, Judy and Alison Smale. “President of Poland Is Sanguine on Economy.” 11 March 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/12/world/europe/12poland.html?_r=1&fta=y

⁷⁷ CIA World Factbook. “Poland.” 23 April 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html#Econ>

⁷⁸ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Background Note: Poland. “Economy.” January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

⁷⁹ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Background Note: Poland. “Economy.” January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

Russia (8.7%). Other import partners include Italy, the Netherlands, France, and China, all between 4 and 7%.^{80, 81}

Energy and Resource⁸²

The nation possesses fairly rich resources, including bituminous coal from a coalfield in Silesia (southwestern Poland). However, production of this resource has developed slowly, because of high extraction costs, often exceeding profits. The industry has been slow to privatize and prices have been falling, with all factors combined leading to low production. Poland has moderate reserves of natural gas, but development of this resource has also proceeded slowly.

After coal, sulfur is the most significant mineral reserve, placing Poland in the ranks of the world leaders in terms of production. The country is also a global producer of silver and copper. Other mineral reserves include salt, limestone, marble, and gypsum.

Agriculture

During the Soviet era, private farms in Poland produced most of the agricultural output. Many of these farms, typically smaller than 5 hectares (12 acres) continue to operate, although farm incomes rapidly fell in postcommunist Poland as prices rose for industrial goods. Also, the agricultural sector was disadvantaged by being forced to compete with food products imported from Western Europe. After 1989, state farms began collapsing and undergoing liquidation. The number of agricultural employees declined in the 1990s, impacted by drought conditions as well as problems related to the changing economy.⁸³

The agricultural sector in Poland today is strong enough to provide for most of the nation's food requirements. The country is one of the top producers in the world of rye and potatoes. Other principal crops are wheat and sugar beets.⁸⁴ Agricultural work accounts for approximately 17.4% of the workforce and 4% of the GDP.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ CIA World Factbook. "Poland." 23 April 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html#Econ>

⁸¹ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Background Note: Poland. "Economy." January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

⁸² Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Economy – Resources and Power – Minerals." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28247>

⁸³ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Economy – Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28249>

⁸⁴ Bartleby.com. Poland. "Economy." 2001–2007. <http://www.bartleby.com/65/po/Poland.html>

⁸⁵ CIA World Factbook. Poland. "Economy." 23 April 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html#Econ>

Ethnic Groups^{86, 87}

The overwhelming majority of people in Poland (approximately 98%) identify as Polish. Other ethnic groups include German (0.4%), Belarusian (0.1%), Ukrainian (0.1%), and other groups are mostly unspecified (2.7%).⁸⁸ This composition contrasts sharply with the landscape that existed prior to World War II, when over one third of the nation's people identified as belonging to non-Polish ethnic groups. During and after the war, the population was greatly affected, not only by the devastating consequences of war, but also by migration and shifting borders. In addition, many ethnic groups that existed before the war came to identify more as Polish after the war because of policies the Polish government undertook to integrate them.⁸⁹

Polish

The Polish language is the native tongue of almost the entire population of Poland, and it is also the national language.^{90, 91, 92} This was not always the case; before World War II, other languages were widely spoken by the various ethnic groups. Post-war assimilation has helped to “Polonize” the population.⁹³

In general, it can be said that the Polish people are characterized by their language as well as their longstanding tradition of integrating ethnic people from a widespread geographic area. Those who assimilate in turn have historically become part of the national identity. Thus, Poland is a multiethnic country, and Polish identity is continually formed by a relatively diverse population.⁹⁴



⁸⁶ Ministry of Interior and Administration. “Characteristics of Ethnic and National Minorities in Poland.” c. 1998–2009.

http://www.mswia.gov.pl/wai/en/10/56/Characteristics_of_ethnic_and_national_minorities_in_Poland.html
#GERMANS

⁸⁷ Ethnic groups in Poland are described in this section in relation to their demographic location in provinces in Poland, which are shown on the map at the following source: Krykiet.com. “Map of Poland: A Map Showing the Sixteen Provinces of Poland.” c. 2004. http://www.krykiet.com/poland_map.htm

⁸⁸ CIA World Factbook. Poland. “People – Poland.” 23 April 2009.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>

⁸⁹ PolandPoland.com. “Ethnic Minorities in Poland.” c. 2004.

http://polandpoland.com/minorities_poland.html

⁹⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. “People – Ethnic Groups.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28237>

⁹¹ Noves. Moskal, Marta. “Language Minorities in Poland at the Moment of Accession to the EU.” 2004.

http://www6.gencat.net/lengcat/noves/hm04primavera-estiu/moskal1_4.htm

⁹² Ethnologue.com. “Polish: A Language of Poland.” c. 2009.

http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=pol

⁹³ PolandPoland.com. “Ethnic Minorities in Poland.” c. 2004.

http://polandpoland.com/minorities_poland.html

⁹⁴ PolandPoland.com. “Ethnic Minorities in Poland.” c. 2004.

http://polandpoland.com/minorities_poland.html

Ukrainian

Ukrainians are a national minority of Poland. They numbered approximately 27,000 in the 2002 national census, mostly living in scattered small groups in the west and north of Poland.⁹⁵ Many formerly lived in southeastern Poland, near the Ukrainian border, but were resettled in 1947. In some areas, they are active in local government and Ukrainian children attend their own schools where they learn the Ukrainian language. Typically, Ukrainians are members of both the Catholic Church of Byzantine Ukrainian Rite and the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church.

German

Members of the German minority group reside mostly in Opolskie Province in southwestern Poland. Here, they are quite influential in local government. The majority of national minority educational institutions in Poland are German language schools. Concerning their religious affiliation, most Germans in Poland are Catholic, and a lesser number are Protestant.

Belarusian

A “significant percentage of the local population” of Podlaskie Province in eastern Poland (near the border with Belarus), Belarusians are also active in local government. They are generally members of the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church. In approximately 40 public schools, children of this minority group learn the Belarusian language, taught by qualified teachers.⁹⁶



⁹⁵ Ministry of Interior and Administration. “Characteristics of Ethnic and National Minorities in Poland.” c. 1998–2009.

http://www.mswia.gov.pl/wai/en/10/56/Characteristics_of_ethnic_and_national_minorities_in_Poland.html #UKRAINIANS

⁹⁶ Ministry of Interior and Administration. “Characteristics of Ethnic and National Minorities in Poland.” c. 1998–2009.

http://www.mswia.gov.pl/wai/en/10/56/Characteristics_of_ethnic_and_national_minorities_in_Poland.html #BELORUSSIANS

Religion

Historical Overview

Christianity in the form of Roman Catholicism is Poland's main religion, practiced historically by the majority in Poland and still today by over 90% of the population.⁹⁷ The roots of Catholicism extend as far back as the nation's establishment in the 10th century, when religious parishes functioned alongside political centers of administration or military edifices such as castles.



© Szczur / flickr.com
Inside a Catholic Church, Krakow, Poland

Mieszko I, the first Polish ruler, and members of his court publicly accepted Christianity for the kingdom when they underwent baptism in 966 C.E. Adopting Catholicism was a political strategy as well as a religious statement. By converting to Roman Catholicism, Prince Mieszko avoided war with the German Holy Roman Empire, and he accrued power from the church's widely-developed political connections.⁹⁸

Roman Catholicism has endured as a strong force in Poland throughout the centuries, although several other faiths have been established as well. Minority religions in modern-day Poland include the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church, Poland's largest non-Catholic faith.⁹⁹ Other minority religions are Greek Catholic, Old Catholic Mariavit, Jehovah's Witnesses, Lutheran, Pentecostal, and several others. There are a very small number of Jews, Mormons, members of the Church of Krishna Consciousness, and Muslims. Most political refugees in 21st century Poland in fact are Muslims who have fled from Chechnya to Poland, where they set up their own mosques, located in the areas where the refugees settled.¹⁰⁰

Catholicism in the 20th Century

During the third partition of Poland, which began in 1795 and ended in 1918, the Polish people experienced severe political repression. Not only were they prohibited from using the Polish language (except in one sector of the country), they were also denied basic rights to organize their society, publish literature, or educate their children as they wished. With such restrictions in place, religious practice became the

⁹⁷ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. International Religious Freedom Report 2008. 19 September 2008. <http://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108465.htm>

⁹⁸ Access My Library. Czerwinski, Alicia. "Sex, Politics, and Religion: The Clash Between Poland and the European Union over Abortion." 22 September 2004. http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-4770728_ITM

⁹⁹ Federal Research Division, U.S. Library of Congress. A Country Study: Poland. Curtis, Glenn E. "Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment: Religion." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

¹⁰⁰ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. International Religious Freedom Report 2008. 19 September 2008. <http://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108465.htm>

only means of national self-expression and the preservation of social bonds... From that situation came a strong new sense of national consciousness that combined 19th century literary, philosophical, and religious trends within the formal structure of the church.¹⁰¹

Thus, the church took on a strong role in shaping Poland's social and intellectual life and its political life as well. This role would play out historically in the next episode of Polish history, the Communist era.

After the Nazi invasion and World War II, central authority in Poland transferred to the communist government as Poland became part of the Soviet bloc. As in the Soviet Union, Stalinism became the foundation of national politics, and political purges of undesirable elements began. People who were considered part of this category included those who questioned or opposed the new regime or those whose backgrounds were suspect. Many people were arrested and sent to penal camps, or they simply disappeared. The communist government tried to make people conform to Soviet norms by dismantling the Polish legislature and staffing it with pro-Soviet loyalists, replacing Polish schoolbooks with Soviet texts, and attacking the Catholic Church. The government accomplished the latter by confiscating church lands, closing seminaries and ending religious instruction in schools, and by discontinuing many of the Church's social services.¹⁰² The Church fought back strongly and once again became an avenue for national Polish self-expression that could not otherwise be manifested or freely articulated.¹⁰³ Although the church and all other national institutions were subject to control by the state, the church was able to keep much of its independence. This was due not only to the large support it enjoyed among the Polish people for representing and defending their interests, but also because it answered to Rome (and the Pope) in matters of importance, rather than to the Polish government.¹⁰⁴ While communist policy controlled other aspects of national life, the Catholic Church was perceived by the general public as "a perceived repository of moral integrity and national tradition."¹⁰⁵



© Lee Fenner
Statue of Pope John Paul II

¹⁰¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. A Country Study: Poland. Curtis, Glenn E. "Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment: Religion. Church and State Before 1945." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

¹⁰² Google Books. Biskupski, Mieczysław B. *The History of Poland* [pps. 132–36]. 2000. http://books.google.com/books?id=QDgaX6q9tycC&dq=Poland's+traditional+economy&source=gbs_summary_s&cad=0

¹⁰³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. A Country Study: Poland. Curtis, Glenn E. "Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment: Religion. Church and State Before 1945." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

¹⁰⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "People – Religion." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28239>

¹⁰⁵ BBC News. Repa, Jan. "Resignation Rocks Polish Church." 8 January 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6240385.stm>

This trend of popular support for the Roman Catholic Church was influenced by the 1978 election of Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, archbishop of Kraków, to the papacy as Pope John Paul II. The first non-Italian to be elevated to this position since the 1500s, John Paul strongly opposed communism, supported the Solidarity Union movement, and gained a large following among the Polish people. After the 1989 fall of communism in Poland, the church under Pope John Paul II attracted an even larger number of Polish adherents as it became more strongly representative of the nation's educational and social activities.^{106, 107} It became a more powerful institution, influencing legislative policy and spreading its influence to public institutions such as schools.¹⁰⁸



The Role of Religion in the Polish Government

The Polish government does not proclaim an official religion or follow the tenets of any religious doctrine. However, the Roman Catholic Church does have considerable influence in the nation's political affairs. Church and state are separate, in accordance with the constitution, but religious affiliation is signaled by the crucifixes that hang on the walls of Parliament and in many public buildings, including schools. Church representatives meet regularly with high-level government officials in a Joint Government-Episcopate Task Force to consider issues involving church and state.^{109, 110}

Under Poland's 1997 constitution, the government provides and enforces the basic right of religious freedom for all those who are a part of Polish society. People can choose any faith and engage as they wish in organizing religious activities, publishing materials, and soliciting funds. Polish citizens can sue the government if it violates their constitutional right to practice religion freely. The government does require that 15 religious groups register with the state and satisfy specific legislative requirements concerning their internal structure. Still, all groups receive "equal protection under the law," according to the constitution. Foreign missionaries can enter the country and operate



¹⁰⁶ Boston.com. Sennott, Charles M. "Catholic Church Withers in Europe." 2 May 2005.

http://www.boston.com/news/world/articles/2005/05/02/catholic_church_withers_in_europe/

¹⁰⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "People – Religion." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28239>

¹⁰⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "People – Religion." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28239>

¹⁰⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "People – Religion." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28239>

¹¹⁰ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. Poland. "International Religious Freedom Report 2008." 19 September 2008. <http://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108465.htm>

freely, with no government registration requirement tied to their status as proselytizers from foreign countries. They are required only to follow laws that apply to foreigners.¹¹¹

The Polish government makes efforts to promote religious tolerance in the country. For instance, government agencies or representatives in Poland partner with NGOs to support activities designed to educate people about discrimination and discourage such practices. One such event took place in April 2008, when the Polish government hosted then-Israeli president Simon Peres, members of a U.S. delegation, and other world leaders to honor the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on its 65th anniversary.¹¹²

Religion in People’s Daily Lives

The Polish people practice their various religions without fear of consequence. Although religious discrimination occasionally takes place, the government opposes any such acts and works to promote religious equality and tolerance. Religious groups retain generally amicable relations with each other.¹¹³

Exchange 1: When do you have service?

Soldier:	When do you have (church) service?	kyedi son nabozenstfa?
Local:	Every Sunday and in the morning on weekdays.	f kazhdon nyedzyelen oraz rano v dnee pofshednye

Although the Catholic Church’s influence has declined across Europe in recent years—partly as a result of consumer culture and encroaching secular values—it has remained relatively strong in Poland. A large number of Polish people have remained practicing Catholics, with the number of men entering the priesthood continuing to be much stronger in Poland than in other European Union (EU)



© Mallo / flickr.com
Free religion

¹¹¹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. Poland. “International Religious Freedom Report 2008.” 19 September 2008. <http://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108465.htm>

¹¹² Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. Poland. “International Religious Freedom Report 2008.” 19 September 2008. <http://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108465.htm>

¹¹³ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. Poland. “International Religious Freedom Report 2008.” 19 September 2008. <http://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108465.htm>

countries.¹¹⁴ According to a survey of 17 EU nations taken by a German polling agency, more people in Poland attend church regularly on Sundays than other nations polled.¹¹⁵ Another source reports that the national average of church attendance on Sunday stands at 50% in Poland, a high figure relative to statistics for other Western European nations.¹¹⁶

Religious Events and Holidays¹¹⁷

Traditional religious celebrations take place throughout Poland. They include several choir and sacred music festivals, seasonal festivals, and other events.¹¹⁸ At the St. Stanislaw Festival held in Kraków in May, cardinals, bishops, and lay people gather to walk with the saint's relics from the church where they are kept to the church where he was executed in the 11th century.^{119, 120} Some religious events are also public holidays, meaning the government offices, banks, post offices, and airlines are closed. The main Polish religious holidays, all Christian, are as follows:

Easter Monday

Easter Monday is preceded by the elaborate rituals that constitute the centuries-old traditions of Holy Week. Many involve a great deal of preparation by those who observe this holiday, including baking bread, painting eggs, and preparing baskets filled with different kinds of food for a church service. On Good Friday, vigils begin at “symbolic tombs of Christ,” and many visitors come to these sites to pray and meditate. Religious processions take place on Holy Saturday, and on Easter Sunday, families prepare elaborate meals and dine together. The Monday that follows Easter is the national holiday.¹²¹



¹¹⁴ Boston.com. Sennott, Charles M. “Catholic Church Withers in Europe.” 2 May 2005.

http://www.boston.com/news/world/articles/2005/05/02/catholic_church_withers_in_europe/

¹¹⁵ CNA. Catholic News Agency. “Polish Lead EU in Sunday Church Attendance.” 14 February 2006.

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/new.php?n=5992>

¹¹⁶ BBC News. Repa, Jan. “Resignation Rocks Polish Church.” 8 January 2007.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6240385.stm>

¹¹⁷ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. Poland. “International Religious Freedom Report 2008.” 19 September 2008. <http://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108465.htm>

¹¹⁸ Polish Music Center. “Music Festivals in Poland.” August 2003.

http://www.usc.edu/dept/polish_music/festival/festival.html

¹¹⁹ Destination360. “Polish Events.” c. 2008. <http://www.destination360.com/europe/poland/events.php>

¹²⁰ Sacred Destinations. “St. Stanislaw’s Church, Krakow.” c. 2005–09. <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/poland/krakow-st-stanislaws-church.htm>

¹²¹ Szkoła Wyższa Psychologii Społecznej. “Easter in Poland.” No date.

http://www.swps.edu.pl/new_www/bia/warsaw_guide_1110986917/holidays_customms_1111053273/easter_poland_1111054324.html

Corpus Christi Day

Held in May or June (variable date), Corpus Christi Day is an occasion for Catholic believers to proclaim their faith publicly. According to tradition, they participate in a procession from a church and walk through the streets of the city or village. A priest walks in the center of the procession, holding the Host (a bread wafer representative of the body of Christ) beneath a decorative canopy. People walking in the procession, watching from the sidewalks, or from inside their homes display religious pictures, banners, and flowers.¹²²

Assumption of the Virgin Mary

This holiday on August 15 celebrates the raising to Heaven, a place of eternal peace and bliss in the Christian faith, of the mother of Christ, otherwise known as the Virgin Mary. Religious services take place throughout the country to commemorate the day. As well as a religious remembrance, it is a national holiday.

All Saints' Day

Also known as the Day of the Dead, All Saints' Day in Poland is a national holiday, a chance for family members to spend time visiting the graves of their deceased friends and family members. They lay flowers on the grave along with candles, which when lit will burn for several hours. The candles ensure that the deceased will not be in darkness, but will be surrounded by light so that they will not lose their way as they travel in the realm beyond death.¹²³



© swperman / flickr.com
All Saints Day in Poland

Christmas

Christmas Day, the Christian holiday that celebrates the birth of Christ, is a time for close family members to celebrate together. They attend masses, sing carols, and share a meal that traditionally is based around some kind of meat. The food is planned and prepared in advance, and usually, people do not do any kind of work on this day except what is needed to serve the meal.¹²⁴ At the



© Piotr Wojcicki
Merry Christmas, Poland 1919

¹²² The Visitor. "Corpus Christi – National Holiday in Poland." March 2008.
<http://www.thevisitor.pl/index.php?id=423>

¹²³ PolandPoland.com. "All Saints' Day: Day of the Dead, Poland." c. 2004.
<http://polandpoland.com/allsaintsday.html>

¹²⁴ Szkoła Wyższa Psychologii Społecznej. "Christmas in Poland." No date.
http://www.swps.edu.pl/new_www/bia/warsaw_guide_1110986917/holidays_customms_1111053273/christmas_1111054164

Christmas Eve dinner that precedes Christmas Day, an extra place is set at the table to represent a guest who arrives unexpectedly or a family member who is no longer present.¹²⁵

St. Stephen's Day

Falling on the second day of the Christmas holiday, St. Stephen's Day is an occasion for celebrating. Friends and family members visit each other, taking time off from work to renew their social bonds and ties of friendship. According to tradition, families who employ domestic help and plan to retain them prepare a special meal for their staff on this day and offer them an employment contract for the year to come.¹²⁶

Buildings of Worship

In 1998, Roman Catholics in Poland comprised more than approximately 9,990 parishes or local churches with associated community activities.¹²⁷ One of the most famous among them is St. Mary's Church in Kraków, destroyed in the 13th century by invasions and rebuilt in the late 14th century. It is famous for its painted wooden altarpiece with over 200 carved figures depicting medieval life, produced by the master carver Wit Stwosz.



© Andrew Stillman
St. Mary's Church

Also distinctively marking the church are its two towers of different heights, both added to the church in the 15th century. St. Mary's has remained an active parish church.¹²⁸

Many other old churches still in active use are also located in Kraków, which was not destroyed by bombing in World War II as Warsaw was.¹²⁹ Some of them include the Corpus Christi Church (14th century), St. Andrews Church (11th century), and the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul (17th century) with its 12 statues of the disciples lining the front entryway.^{130, 131, 132} The Church of St. Stanislaw (14th century), built on the banks of

¹²⁵ The Visitor. "Advent and Christmas Days in Polish Tradition." March 2008.

<http://www.thevisitor.pl/index.php?id=416>

¹²⁶ Szkoła Wyższa Psychologii Społecznej. "Christmas in Poland." No date.

http://www.swps.edu.pl/new_www/bia/warsaw_guide_1110986917/holidays_customms_1111053273/christmas_1111054164

¹²⁷ Polska. "Churches and Religious Life in Poland." c. 2002–08.

<http://www.poland.gov.pl/Churches,And,Religious,Life,in,Poland,397.html>

¹²⁸ Sacred Destinations. "St. Mary's Church, Krakow." c. 2005–09. <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/poland/krakow-st-marys-church.htm>

¹²⁹ First Things: The Journal of Religion, Culture, and Public Life. Neuhaus, Richard John. "Poland: Reflections on a New World." c. 1994. http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=4414

¹³⁰ Sacred Destinations. "Corpus Christi Church, Krakow." c. 2005–09. <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/poland/krakow-corpus-christi-church.htm>

¹³¹ Sacred Destinations. "St. Andrew's Church, Krakow." c. 2005–09. <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/poland/krakow-st-andrews-church.htm>

¹³² Sacred Destinations. "Church of Sts. Peter and Paul, Krakow." c. 2005–09. <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/poland/krakow-st-peter-and-paul-church.htm>

the Vistula River in Kraków, is the site of a national festival held in the spring. Named after Poland's first native-born saint (St. Stanislaw, canonized in 1253), the Church of St. Stanislaw is the destination of a yearly procession in which the namesake saint's relics are carried from their permanent resting place in Wawel Cathedral. Several famous Polish artists and writers are buried at the Church of St. Stanislaw. They include poet Czeslaw Milosz and composer Karol Szymanowski.¹³³

Poland's center of Catholicism and the world's third-largest site for Catholic pilgrimages is located in Częstochowa, near Kraków. The Monastery of Jasna Góra houses the icon known as Our Lady of Częstochowa (also known as the Black Madonna), believed to have been painted by Luke the Evangelist. According to legend, the icon stood as a shrine in Constantinople for 500 years and in 803 was transferred to a royal palace in Belz (now in Ukraine near the Polish border). The Polish army, fleeing a battle, carried it to Poland in 1382. The icon, associated with miracles, was declared "Queen of Poland" by King John Casimir in 1656; he also named the city in which it rested (Częstochowa) as the nation's spiritual capital.^{134, 135}



© Lee Fenner
Inside a monastery, Warsaw

A famed Jewish synagogue in Kraków, the Tempel (Temple) Synagogue has a strong tradition of welcoming the city's non-Orthodox Jews. Built in 1860–62, the grandeur of its design "captures the wealth of Jewish life here" as it existed before World War II.¹³⁶ It was damaged during the war but repaired afterward, and until 1985, prayer services were held here in Hebrew, Polish, and German languages. Concerts of classical and Jewish music are often held there today.

Behavior in Places of Worship

Statues and images of Christ are sacred to the Polish people and should be approached quietly and with a respectful attitude. The Roman Catholic Church represents much of Poland's religious, cultural, and political history as well as the traditions with which the Polish people identify.

¹³³ Sacred Destinations. "St. Stanislaw's Church, Krakow." c. 2005–09. <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/poland/krakow-st-stanislaws-church.htm>

¹³⁴ Sacred Destinations. "Jasna Góra and the Shrine of Our Lady of Częstochowa." c. 2005–09. <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/poland/czestochowa-jasna-gora.htm>

¹³⁵ First Things: The Journal of Religion, Culture, and Public Life. Neuhaus, Richard John. "Poland: Reflections on a New World." c. 1994. http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=4414

¹³⁶ Sacred Destinations. "Tempel Synagogue, Krakow." c. 2005–09. <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/poland/krakow-tempel-synagogue.htm>

Exchange 2: May I enter the church?

Soldier:	May I enter the church?	chi mogen veyshch do koshchyowa?
Local:	Yes.	tak

Visitors should dress modestly and avoid wearing skimpy, revealing, or dirty clothing. The dress code includes clean shirts and long pants for men, and skirts or long pants with blouses or sweaters for women. Women's clothing should be loose fitting, and skirts should not be shorter than knee length. Women may cover their hair with a scarf, but men must always remove hats or caps. Inside a church, visitors should refrain from touching paintings or statues.



Exchange 3: Do I have to remove my head cover?

Soldier:	Do I have to remove my head cover?	chi mooshen zdyonch nakrichye gwovi?
Local:	Yes.	tak

If visiting synagogues, mosques, or churches of other denominations, visitors should likewise observe polite and modest conduct and dress conservatively.

In general, visitors to any church or building of worship should follow any protocols that are posted in writing or that they see local people observing. Once inside, if people are praying or meditating, visitors should remain silent as talking can interrupt prayers or be interpreted as rude behavior. Visitors also should not bring food or drink into a church, synagogue, or mosque, and they should not take photographs inside places of worship without permission.

Traditions

Traditional Jobs & Economy

Until the end of World War II, Poland had a free-market economy, based mainly on agriculture.¹³⁷ The majority of the Polish people lived in rural areas, and they historically lived and worked on small family farms. For centuries, their traditions often included keeping livestock animals in a small “barn” area adjoined to the house, whose floor was covered in straw. The farmers often kept cows and pigs, using the cows for milk and slaughtering the pigs for meat. During winter, they typically used a workhorse to till the fields, turning the soil to aerate and expose it to frost, which would kill crop contaminants or pests.¹³⁸ Farmers and rural laborers did all the agricultural work by hand, even on large estates.



© Leszek Kozlowski
Horse-drawn carriage

After World War II, many Poles left the countryside for the city, trying to find jobs in an economy that was beginning to industrialize under the new communist government. Farming lost its status as a traditional occupation as young people moved away, and the population that remained behind was aging, struggling to keep their farms operating productively. The multigenerational rural social network was divided by the transition, and as farms became fragmented, landholdings were split into small, inefficient plots. By the 1980s, 30% of the Polish population worked in agriculture, 40% in industry, and 30% in the service sector.¹³⁹ Industrial jobs in the early years required little education. In fact, more than 40% of the agricultural workers making the transition to urban jobs were illiterate as late as 1958. Educational requirements rose quickly after that, however, and 95% of the workers had at least an elementary education by 1978. Industrial opportunities included jobs in airplane and automobile production, copper and coal mining, and other kinds of manufacturing.¹⁴⁰

Under the communist regime, all aspects of the economy (pricing, production quotas, distribution) were controlled by the central leadership. Industrial work offered status to workers by representing national development. It eventually became a means of advancing to white-collar jobs and even positions of social leadership. Prestige became more associated with industrial jobs as workers formed councils by the late 1950s, their

¹³⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. “Economy.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28242>

¹³⁸ Organic Consumers Association. “Traditional Organic Farming in Poland Threatened by EU Laws.” Cited from International Herald Tribune. Rosenthal, Elisabeth. “In Poland, ‘Green’ Fields Besieged.” 3 April 2008. http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_11349.cfm

¹³⁹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. A Country Study: Poland. Curtis, Glenn E. “Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment. The Social Order: The Working Classes.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

¹⁴⁰ U.S. Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. A Country Study: Poland. Curtis, Glenn E. “Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment. The Social Order. The Working Classes: Industrial Workers.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

voices increasingly important in shaping industrial policy. By the late 1980s, however, when communism was declining and free-market reforms were beginning to take effect, industrial workers were struggling financially. Almost half of them were forced to take second jobs in order to avoid slipping into poverty. Not only was unemployment high, but inequality in pay schedules was extreme. The highest wages went to coal miners due to the importance of coal as a “high-currency export.”¹⁴¹

Traditions concerning the Polish economy have changed dramatically in recent years. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the area of farming. Where Polish farms were once small, local enterprises, owned and managed by individual farmers, they are now following a trend toward large-scale, highly regulated mechanized farming. Since Poland joined the European Union in 2004, traditional farming has been altered by regulations



concerning competition, efficiency, and sanitary standards. For instance, farms that operate commercially are required to have cement floors in their barns, special slaughtering devices, and mechanized milking equipment. The result of this trend and its many regulations is the almost complete elimination of small, traditional family farms in favor of large, industrialized factory farms.¹⁴² Fewer employees are needed in the mechanized, increasingly globalized farming enterprises. In some modern hog factory farms, as few as two people may be required to take care of 10,000 hogs.¹⁴³ Although the trend continues toward factory farming, Poland has “remained one of the last strongholds of small farming in Europe,” and many Polish farmers are struggling to keep traditional farming methods intact.¹⁴⁴

Honor and Values¹⁴⁵

The concept of “Honor and Fatherland” as an expression of patriotism is strong in Polish history. It first merged with democratic ideals in the 19th century, when Polish nobles

¹⁴¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Poland*. Curtis, Glenn E. “Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment. The Social Order. The Working Classes: Industrial Workers.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

¹⁴² Organic Consumers Association. “Traditional Organic Farming in Poland Threatened by EU Laws.” Cited from International Herald Tribune. Rosenthal, Elisabeth. “In Poland, ‘Green’ Fields Besieged.” 3 April 2008. http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_11349.cfm

¹⁴³ Sovereignty. The Independent. Howden, Daniel, and Kamil Tchorek. “US Pig Farmer Raises Almighty Stink With Invasion of Poland’s Countryside.” 18 November 2003. <http://www.sovereignty.org.uk/siteinfo/newsround/badfarm.html>

¹⁴⁴ Organic Consumers Association. “Traditional Organic Farming in Poland Threatened by EU Laws.” Cited from International Herald Tribune. Rosenthal, Elisabeth. “In Poland, ‘Green’ Fields Besieged.” 3 April 2008. http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_11349.cfm

¹⁴⁵ Google Books. Gella, Aleksander. *Development of Class Structure in Eastern Europe: Poland and Her Southern Neighbors* [pp. 154–57] 1988. http://books.google.com/books?id=8keIXDyF_EoC&pg=PA154&lpg=PA154&dq=honor+and+values+in+Poland&source=bl&ots=Jc3Ixj7KMr&sig=orJuQHFmDpbQo0vT4fbkIZH8CY&hl=en&ei=PCUUSjtjVI6L6tQOE3IznDQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4

and peasants united during the Napoleonic Campaigns and revolutionary struggles in Poland. It came to be associated with education to the extent that only men who possessed a certain level of higher education were allowed to challenge other men to fight in a duel or to accept such a challenge.

Courage, too, was a highly esteemed value and came to be associated with Polish national character. It was deemed necessary not only in daily life but also on the battlefield and in the fight for national identity. Courage became written into the nation's literature as a virtue that one should strive for in all circumstances. Particularly among aristocrats and the educated class, faithfulness to a cause was another revered quality, associated alongside courage with Polish honor. The development of faithfulness as a national virtue was stimulated by Poland's experience of repeated occupation by foreign powers. The lower classes viewed it differently, since faithfulness (or fidelity) was linked to the status quo and opposed to social change that would benefit society more broadly.



© Simczuk / flickr.com
Young patriotism

The class of educated thinkers in Poland was virtually eliminated in World War II.¹⁴⁶ However, the values associated with it, which have always existed throughout Polish society, continue to characterize an ideal in Polish culture. In addition to patriotism, courage, and fidelity, these qualities include acting out of conviction, rejecting conformity when it interferes with moral imperative, and affirming solidarity with those who suffer injustice.

Greetings, Politeness, and Communication

Polish people, both women and men, customarily greet foreigners they meet for the first time with a firm handshake. A Polish man might also greet a woman by formally kissing her hand, although this is less common, being considered somewhat old-fashioned. In subsequent meetings, people might simply nod in greeting.¹⁴⁷ Although one should not stare during formal introductions, which could be misinterpreted as a challenge, it is considered evasive or rude to break appropriate eye contact. On the other hand, if a man has not been introduced to a single woman, he should avoid making prolonged or overly direct eye contact with her. Similarly, if a man is shaking hands with a woman, he should let her initiate the handshake;



© Dariusz Boron
Friendly smile

¹⁴⁶ Google Books. Gella, Aleksander. *Development of Class Structure in Eastern Europe: Poland and Her Southern Neighbors* [p. 195-96]. 1988.

http://books.google.com/books?id=8keIXDyF_EoC&pg=PA154&lpg=PA154&dq=honor+and+values+in+Poland&source=bl&ots=Jc3Ixj7KMr&sig=orJuQHFmDpbbQo0vT4fbkIZH8CY&hl=en&ei=PCUUSTjVI6L6tQOE3IznDQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4

¹⁴⁷ Culture Crossing. "Poland: Greetings." No date.

http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=7&CID=165

to do otherwise could appear overly aggressive. Introductions tend to be formal and somewhat reserved. Even though Polish people are friendly when they meet newcomers, embracing or kissing on the cheek is not acceptable except among family members or close friends.^{148, 149}

Exchange 4: Good afternoon.

Soldier:	Good afternoon.	dzyen dobri
Local:	Good afternoon.	dzyen dobri

The Polish people place a premium on openness and friendliness, expressing these qualities to visitors and expecting that their approach will be reciprocated. For this reason, it is important to smile and speak in a friendly voice when greeting people in Poland. When conversing in general, a friendly demeanor can go a long way in promoting good intentions.¹⁵⁰



It is also important to note that Polish people have great pride in their culture. A visitor who knows something about their history and traditions and is openly willing to learn more will earn respect for holding such a positive attitude. This includes having ability to speak at a conversational level and attempting to learn the language further. Such an approach is likely to build trust and lead to the most cooperation from local people.

Exchange 5: How are you?

Soldier:	How are you?	yak shen pan chooye?
Local:	Fine, very well.	dzyenkooyen, dobzhe

¹⁴⁸ JobMonkey.com. Teach in Eastern Europe. “Common Customs in Poland.” c. 1999–2009. http://www.jobmonkey.com/teaching/europe/html/customs_in_poland.html

¹⁴⁹ Travel Etiquette. Etiquette in Poland. “Family, Faith, and Introductions” and “Socializing.” c. 2000–09. <http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/EtiquettePoland.html>

¹⁵⁰ Travel Etiquette. Etiquette in Poland. “Family, Faith, and Introductions.” c. 2000–09. <http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/EtiquettePoland.html>

Because Poles tend to project formality during greetings and initial conversations, visitors should respond in a formal manner themselves. At the same time, Polish people are direct in their conversation, tending to say what's on their mind and even asking questions that may seem too personal. This should not be interpreted as impolite or overly casual; instead, it reflects their effort to know the visitor and build a relationship based on openness and honesty. Poles are known for appreciating people for their personal qualities and thus, they seek to discover what those qualities are. Although honesty is seen as a communicative virtue, diplomacy is also valued; emphasis may be placed on “finessing” a message so that it is delivered diplomatically.^{151, 152} Humor and sarcasm are also a large part of the communication style in Poland, woven into the message and used frequently.¹⁵³

Visitors should use formal address (the equivalent of Mr. and Mrs., along with the family name) when initially meeting and conversing with Polish people, and should avoid first names unless they have been invited to use them.¹⁵⁴ As direct conversations continue, Poles will still use the formal address but without the family name. To switch from using formal to informal names when meeting Poles involves a ritual acknowledgment that the visitor is now part of the “inner circle.”¹⁵⁵ A visitor who achieves the status of the “inner circle” is considered similar to a family member or a close associate in the sense of being part of a basic social network. Inner circle members can be relied on for advice, support, and favors (such as finding an apartment or a job, or maneuvering a shortcut through bureaucracy).¹⁵⁶



© Chad Magiera
Inner circle of friends

¹⁵¹ Travel Etiquette. Etiquette in Poland. “Family, Faith, and Introductions.” c. 2000–09. <http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/EtiquettePoland.html>

¹⁵² Travel Etiquette. Etiquette in Poland. “Business Etiquette and Protocol: Communication Styles.” c. 2000–09. <http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/EtiquettePoland.html>

¹⁵³ Culture Crossing. “Poland: Communication Style.” No date. http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=8&CID=165

¹⁵⁴ Travel Etiquette. Etiquette in Poland. “Family, Faith, and Introductions.” c. 2000–09. <http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/EtiquettePoland.html>

¹⁵⁵ Kwintessential. Poland: Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette. “Social Etiquette, Customs and Protocol: Meeting and Greeting.” No date. <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/poland.html>

¹⁵⁶ Kwintessential. Poland: Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette. “Social Etiquette, Customs and Protocol: Meeting and Greeting.” No date. <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/poland.html>

Exchange 6: Hello!

Soldier:	Hi, Mr. Kowalski.	dzyen dobry Panu, panye Kovalskee
Local:	Hello!	dzyen dobri
Soldier:	Are you doing well?	fshistko f pozhondkoo oo pana?
Local:	Yes.	tak

Family solidarity and family values are emphasized within Polish society. They are often expressed through, or associated with, the Roman Catholic Church and its conservative presence in the community. For this reason, it is important to show respect not only for family traditions but also for the Church and its activities in Poland. Visitors who have anti-Catholic or atheist views would be well advised to keep their opinions to themselves rather than announcing them publicly.^{157, 158}



© Taras Khimchak
Avoid speaking to others with
your hands in your pockets

Even though Polish people tend to be openly opinionated, it's a good idea for guests to approach certain topics carefully. In general, it's a good idea to avoid criticizing the country or voicing opinions about anything currently controversial. Other topics to be avoided, unless a Polish person mentions them (and then discussed only with discretion) are the Holocaust and communism.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Travel Etiquette. Etiquette in Poland. "The Importance of Family." c. 2000–09.

<http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/EtiquettePoland.html>

¹⁵⁸ JobMonkey.com. Teach in Eastern Europe. "Common Customs in Poland." c. 1999–2009.

http://www.jobmonkey.com/teaching/europe/html/customs_in_poland.html

¹⁵⁹ Travel Etiquette. Etiquette in Poland. "History and Contemporary Culture." c. 2000–09.

<http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/EtiquettePoland.html>

Conversational exchanges should always be direct and polite.

Exchange 7: Good evening!

Soldier:	Good evening!	dobri vyechoor
Local:	Good evening!	dobri vyechoor

A good way to begin a conversation is by making simple inquiries about someone’s well-being. In particular, it is important to ask about the family members of the person you are meeting, without being overly personal or inquisitive.

Exchange 8: How is your family?

Soldier:	How is your family?	yak tam rodzyeena?
Local:	They are doing fine, thank you.	dzyenkooyen, dozbhe

Many of the social exchanges or ways of speaking and behaving that Americans or Europeans find normal are also the standard in Poland.

Certain forms of behavior are considered to be taboo in Poland. They include such things as burping while eating, or standing too close to a diner eating in a restaurant. Standing with one’s hands in pockets while talking is also considered rude, as is sitting in a position with the ankle crossed over the knee. Other unacceptable behaviors include jaywalking, smoking in unapproved areas, and drinking in public.^{160, 161}



¹⁶⁰ Culture Crossing. “Poland: Taboos.” No date. http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=14&CID=165

¹⁶¹ A to Z of Manners & Etiquette. “Polish Etiquette.” c. 2006. <http://www.a-to-z-of-manners-and-etiquette.com/polish-etiquette.html>

Hospitality and Gift-Giving^{162, 163, 164, 165}

Being invited into a Polish person’s home is an honor, and the guest should acknowledge this by being on time and showing good manners. Being 5–10 minutes late is okay when meeting friends, but for a formal dinner, punctuality is expected.¹⁶⁶ When entering the home, visitors should observe the behavior and customs of the host and other guests and try to effortlessly blend in. Some customs are fairly standard across cultures. For instance, guests should dress in clean and modest clothing, preferably somewhat formal and conservative. The host might ask them to remove their shoes before entering the house, providing a pair of slippers.

It is customary to bring a gift when invited into a Polish person’s home. Guests can bring flowers for both informal and formal occasions but should avoid bringing white chrysanthemums (they are used for funerals) or red roses if your hostess is married. Regardless of the type of flowers chosen, individual blooms should be an odd number.¹⁶⁷ Other appropriate gifts include wine, candy, and good quality pastries.



© Mark Dodds
Polish Tea Party

Exchange 9: This gift is for you.

Soldier:	This gift is for you.	ten oopomeenek yest dla vas
Local:	Thank you.	dzyenkooyen

¹⁶² Kwintessential. Poland: Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette. “Social Etiquette, Customs and Protocol: Gift-Giving Etiquette.” No date. <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/poland.html>

¹⁶³ Travel Etiquette. Etiquette in Poland. “Socialising.” c. 2000–09. <http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/EtiquettePoland.html>

¹⁶⁴ Kwintessential. Poland: Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette. “Social Etiquette, Customs and Protocol: Dining Etiquette.” No date. <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/poland.html>

¹⁶⁵ A to Z of Manners and Etiquette. “Polish Etiquette.” c. 2006. <http://www.a-to-z-of-manners-and-etiquette.com/polish-etiquette.html>

¹⁶⁶ Culture Crossing. “Poland: Views of Time.” No date. http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=11&CID=165

¹⁶⁷ Poles used to purchase flowers by the dozen, but during WWII they began buying fewer flowers to save money. The custom to purchase an odd number of blooms came from the Russians who reserve even numbers of flowers for funerals.

When selecting a gift, a visitor will want to keep in mind that a modestly priced gift is more appropriate than one that is expensive. Giving an expensive gift might cause the recipient to feel uncomfortable or embarrassed.

Tea and vodka are commonly served at dinners before, during, and after the meal. Poles are known for their good etiquette, and if a guest's glass is empty, the host will not fail to fill it up.

Exchange 10: I appreciate your hospitality.

Soldier:	I really appreciate your hospitality.	bardzo dzyenkooyen za vashon goshcheennoshch
Local:	It is nothing.	oh, nye ma o chim mooveech

At the dinner table, guests should not seat themselves but rather wait for the host or hostess to tell them where to sit. Before dinner begins, the host makes a toast, and nobody should begin drinking before this happens. Others may then follow, taking care to hold direct eye contact with the persons to whom the toast is made and to stand when toasting if the host did so. Likewise, guests should allow the host to begin eating before they begin.



Exchange 11: What is the name of this dish?

Soldier:	What is the name of this dish?	yak shyen naziva ta potrava?
Local:	It's hunter's stew.	to yest beegos

Good manners in a Polish home require that certain protocols be observed. A guest should eat holding the fork in the left hand and knife in the right, not switching back and forth. Wrists should be placed on the table while chewing food, rather than placing them on one's lap or under the table. If the knife and fork are laid down on the plate, the implements should be in a crossed position,



which signals that the guest will continue eating. At the end of the meal, to signal that eating is finished, the knife and fork can be laid across the right side of the plate lying parallel to each other. Finally, guests should not fail to compliment the host or hostess on the quality of the food.

Exchange 12: The food tastes so good.

Soldier:	The food tastes so good.	smakooye fspanyale
Local:	Thank you.	dzyenkooyen

One way to express gratitude for the invitation is to offer to help the hostess with food preparation or clean-up after dinner. Also, showing interest in the food that is served can lend itself to interesting conversation around the dinner table.

Exchange 13: What ingredients are used?

Soldier:	What ingredients are used to make hunter's stew?	s chego robee shyen beegos?
Local:	There is cabbage, bits of meats, other vegetables, and spices.	yest too kapoosta, kavawkee myensa, eenne vazhiva ee pshipravi

When eating dinner in a Polish home, try to eat everything on the plate except for a very small amount. This signals to the host and hostess that they have provided well. To show appreciation, a guest should send a personal thank-you note after the event.

Food and Drink Traditions

Popular drinks in Poland include tea and vodka, typically served at both formal and informal events. One Polish tradition that may be observed is the holding of a sugar cube between the front teeth while sipping tea, to sweeten the drink. Vodka, too, is a favored drink, served not only at special events and social get-togethers but also for meals. It is the preferred drink for toasting, which may occur several times during the course of a meal. The vodka is poured into a small glass so that a person can consume it in one gulp. A widely popular toast made with vodka is to wish good health and a long life to others.



© hugovk / flickr.com
Polish vodka

The Polish people are proud of the vodka they produce, which is known worldwide for its quality.^{168, 169}

Food served in Poland is typical of other Slavic countries, emphasizing meat along with bread, potatoes, and other starches. Common ingredients that Polish cooks use are sour cream, beets, sauerkraut, cucumbers, sausages, and mushrooms. Spices frequently added include dill, caraway seeds, marjoram, and parsley. Soups are a popular part of the cuisine, often made of beets, mushrooms, wheat starch, barley, sour rye, potatoes, cabbage, and cucumbers.^{170, 171}

Exchange 14: This food is very good.

Soldier:	This food is very good.	to yest napravden smachne
Local:	This is a casserole.	to yest zapyekanka

Polish cuisine incorporates a mixture of flavors and preparation methods from surrounding countries. It is influenced by Lithuanian, Jewish, Hungarian, Armenian, and Cossack cooking, as well as Italian and French. Regional and native Polish influences also appear, such as a taste for fish from the northern lake region and cooking with venison from the country's many forests. Age-old Polish cooking is celebrated for its customary use of "organic produce prepared by natural methods, cooked in the traditional home-made style..."¹⁷²

Dress Codes

In Poland, clothing must be adapted to the often unpredictable weather that tends toward cold or cool temperatures in many areas of the country during much of the year. As in most countries, season and climate affect clothing availability. An example of this can be seen in



© blogsorbeta / flickr.com
Conservative female fashion

¹⁶⁸ A to Z of Manners & Etiquette. "Polish Etiquette: Social and Family." c. 2006. <http://www.a-to-z-of-manners-and-etiquette.com/polish-etiquette.html>

¹⁶⁹ Kwintessential. Poland: Language, Culture, Customs, and Etiquette. "Social Etiquette, Customs, and Protocol: Dining Etiquette." No date. <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/poland.html>

¹⁷⁰ JobMonkey.com. Teach in Eastern Europe. "Polish Food and Drink." c. 1999–2009. http://www.jobmonkey.com/teaching/europe/html/food_in_poland.html

¹⁷¹ StayPoland.com. Food." No date. <http://www.staypoland.com/poland-food.htm>

¹⁷² PolandforAll.com. "Polish Food – Recipes." c. 2005–07. <http://www.polandforall.com/polish-food-recipes.html>

the fact that T-shirts in Poland are stocked in stores one month after they are stocked in Romania (farther south).¹⁷³

Clothing trends in Poland have typically been conservative in recent years, characterized by modesty. This is especially true of business attire worn for meetings and official events. On these occasions, Poles avoid wearing anything that is overly casual (T-shirts, tennis shoes, etc.), instead tending toward formality and subdued colors. Men wear business suits and ties for business purposes. Depending on the company they work for, they may also dress in cotton slacks with a well-cut shirt and jacket or sweater, clean and in good condition. Women in business environments wear dresses or suits that are conservative in style and color, perhaps accenting their outfit with a tasteful scarf. They tend to avoid wearing showy, ostentatious jewelry.^{174, 175}

Exchange 15: Is this acceptable to wear?

Soldier:	Is this acceptable to wear?	chi to mozhna vvozhich?
Local:	Yes.	tak

As market reforms have progressed in Poland, many people are now dressing less conservatively and becoming more individualistic in their fashion choices. They select brighter colors and bolder designs than previously. Those in the upper income brackets are choosing to shop in boutiques or higher-end stores. Here, they can find international and western designer brands, which are higher priced, reflecting an economy that has expanded.¹⁷⁶



The most common places where Polish people shop for clothing are bazaars, supermarkets, and traditional department stores or clothing outlets. At these places, low prices can be found (compared to boutiques, for instance) although the lowest prices are available in secondhand stores, often the only places where higher-priced Western brands are affordable. Many people

¹⁷³ HKTDC. “The Promise of Poland: Fashion Statement.” c. 2000–2009. <http://www.hktdc.com/info/vp/a/emk/en/2/1/1/1X00QYUC/Emerging-Markets/The-Promise-of-Poland.htm>
¹⁷⁴ A to Z of Manners & Etiquette. “Polish Etiquette: Polish Dress Etiquette.” c. 2006. <http://www.a-to-z-of-manners-and-etiquette.com/polish-etiquette.html>
¹⁷⁵ Executive Planet. “Poland: Business Dress.” 2006. http://www.executiveplanet.com/index.php?title=Poland:_Business_Dress
¹⁷⁶ HKTDC. “The Promise of Poland: Fashion Statement.” c. 2000–2009. <http://www.hktdc.com/info/vp/a/emk/en/2/1/1/1X00QYUC/Emerging-Markets/The-Promise-of-Poland.htm>

buy their clothing in a secondhand store because it is the only place they can afford to shop.¹⁷⁷

Exchange 16: How should I dress?

Soldier:	How should I dress?	yak mam shyen oobrach?
Local:	It is okay to wear shorts and sneakers.	proshe shyen oobrach na sportovo

At the same time, the trend toward shopping in secondhand stores reflects a widespread change in attitude, linked to the population’s increased general wealth. This new buying confidence motivates young people in particular to shop in secondhand stores out of a desire to be stylish, rather than a need to be economical; they are “bargain-hunting” in secondhand stores looking for trendy, vintage clothing rather than cheap clothing. Older customers at these same stores are there out of necessity, for they lack the means to pay higher prices.¹⁷⁸

Non-Religious Celebrations and Holidays

Each year, Poland is home to many public celebrations to which all people living in or visiting the country are invited. Non-religious events include the internationally popular Mozart Festival, held in Warsaw and lasting an entire month. During this period, the Warsaw Chamber Opera hosts a series of concerts that showcase the works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, famed Austrian composer. Another celebration is the Jewish Culture Festival, first held as a scholarly conference in 1988 but later transformed into a cultural event. Its focus is on music, including Jewish classical and folk music and synagogue singing traditions. A third event honoring the arts is the Kraków film festival, which usually falls in late May and early June. Featuring documentaries, short and long films, and animations, it is well attended by Europeans from all parts of the continent.¹⁷⁹



© Akbar Simonsen
Mozart

Most public holidays in Poland are affiliated with religion, but a few non-religious public holidays exist, marked by closures of banks and government offices. In addition, stores

¹⁷⁷ Euromonitor.com. “Clothing and Footwear in Poland: Most Common Places to Shop.” September 2007. http://www.euromonitor.com/Clothing_And_Footwear_in_Poland

¹⁷⁸ The New York Times. “In Poland, Style Comes Used and by the Pound.” 13 December 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/14/world/europe/14warsaw.html>

¹⁷⁹ Destination 360. “Polish Events.” c. 2009. <http://www.destination360.com/europe/poland/events>

are required to close on these days according to a law that passed 1 November 2007.¹⁸⁰ Public holidays shown in the following list are for 2009 and 2010.^{181, 182}

New Year's Day

New Year's Day on 1 January follows New Year's Eve (Sylwester, or St. Silvester's Day), celebrated with parties and dances. Popular New Year's Day activities include sleigh rides, often ending with outdoor celebrations, building bonfires, and sharing food specialties. This is a scaled-back version of old Polish traditions, in which the gentry would ride in their sleighs from house to house to participate in dining, dancing, and entertainment.¹⁸³

State Holiday (Święto Państwowe, formerly Labor Day)

Under the Polish Communist regime, Labor Day on 1 May celebrated the country's working class and laborers. To honor their national accomplishments and contributions to society, the government organized events such as musical concerts and parades. After the fall of communism, the government kept the date of 1 May as a national holiday but renamed the holiday to downplay its prior association with communism.

National Day (Constitution Day)

Falling on 3 May, National Day (also called Constitution Day) marks the date when the Polish Constitution became official upon its signing in 1791. The date is symbolic in that only a year after the document was signed, invading forces (from Prussia, Austria, and Russia) divided the country, and it was not until November 1918 that actual independence was achieved. Still, 3 May is set aside as a state holiday, and events such as parades and regional festivals are held in the cities to celebrate national pride.¹⁸⁴

Independence Day, 11 November

This holiday commemorates national independence and the end of over a century of foreign invasion and occupation. Poland was partitioned three times (1772, 1793, 1795) and ruled by its neighbors, Prussia, Austria, and Russia. However, these three invaders suffered defeat



© Charlotte Powell
Independence Day parade

¹⁸⁰ Q++ Studio. Poland. "Public Holidays and Bank Holidays for Poland: Recent News and Updates." c. 1989-2009. <http://www.qppstudio.net/publicolidays2009/poland.htm>

¹⁸¹ World Travel Guide. "Public Holidays: Poland." c. 2009. http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/226/public_holidays/Europe/Poland.html

¹⁸² Q++ Studio. Poland. "Public Holidays and Bank Holidays for Poland." c. 1989-2009. <http://www.qppstudio.net/publicolidays2009/poland.htm>

¹⁸³ IESN. Opole University of Technology. "Events in Poland: The New Year's Day and Carnival." c. 2005-06. <http://www.esn.po.opole.pl/index.php?dir=guide&site=events>

¹⁸⁴ Destination 360. "Polish Events." c. 2009. <http://www.destination360.com/europe/poland/events>

in World War I, and in November 1918, Poland regained its national independence, this time permanently.¹⁸⁵

Social Events

Weddings

Polish weddings, the majority conducted through the Catholic Church, are similar to Catholic or Christian weddings in other parts of the world. There are some notable differences in Poland, however. One example is at the reception that follows the wedding, when the bride's and groom's parents meet the newlyweds and offer them a glass of wine, and bread with salt sprinkled over it.¹⁸⁶

Exchange 17: I wish you both happiness.

Soldier:	I wish you both happiness.	zhichen vam oboygoo shchenshchya
Local:	We are honored.	dzyenkooyemi, bardzo nam meewo

This symbolic bread and wine (or vodka sometimes in the modern era) follows an old tradition. The bread, to be tasted by both the bride and groom, signifies the hope that they should never endure hunger but rather enjoy abundance in their marriage. The salt symbolizes the need to cope with difficulties or struggles in life and also represents the healing, cleansing, and protective power associated with salt. The wine signals that the couple should enjoy happiness and good health in their lives.^{187, 188}



Another important tradition that has endured is the unveiling of the bride, which also takes place at the wedding reception. At this stage of the ceremony, the guests (sometimes just the single women present) stand in a circle around the bride, and either her mother or the maid of honor removes the bridal veil from

¹⁸⁵ Young Diplomats. Holidays: Poland. Bednarz, Halina. "November 11 – Independence Day." December 2006. <http://webnews.textalk.com/en/article.php?id=228513>

¹⁸⁶ PolandPoland.com. "Polish Wedding Traditions." http://polandpoland.com/polish_weddings.html

¹⁸⁷ Polish American Congress. "Polish Weddings." No date. <http://geocities.com/musetti.geo/polwedding.html>

¹⁸⁸ PolskiInternet.com. "Polish Traditions and Customs: Wedding Traditions." May 2009. <http://www.polskiinternet.com/english/info/wedding.html>

her head. The veil may then be transferred to the maid of honor or a bridesmaid. This part of the ceremony symbolizes the transition from unmarried girl to married woman.^{189, 190}

Exchange 18: Congratulations on your wedding!

Soldier:	Congratulations on your wedding!	serdechne zhichenya z okazee shlyooboo
Local:	We are honored you could attend.	chyeshimi shyen, zhe mook pan vzyonch udzyaw

During the wedding dance, also called the Bridal Dance in accordance with tradition, guests at the reception donate money for the privilege of one last dance with the bride. They arrange this by either pinning money to her dress or putting it in a designated place, such as an apron worn by the maid of honor or a decorated basket or other container. The bride and groom later use this money to help pay for their honeymoon.^{191, 192}



© nickpalmer / flickr.com
A bride dances with one of her guests

Another old tradition that has lost some of its importance customarily took place before the bride and groom departed for the church. Guests would gather at the bride’s home to witness her parents and relatives give a blessing to the couple before they married. The bride’s mother usually conducted the ritual, sprinkling both her daughter and the groom with Holy Water and then offering them a crucifix, which they would both kiss. The father and other family members might also participate in sprinkling the holy water. Also symbolizing the separation and farewell of the bride from her parents, this ceremony was so significant in times past that if either parent were deceased, the wedding party would first go to the cemetery on their way to church, to pray that the deceased parent would bless the union.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Polish American Congress. “Polish Weddings.” No date.
<http://geocities.com/musetti.geo/polwedding.html>

¹⁹⁰ PolskiInternet.com. “Polish Traditions and Customs: Wedding Traditions.” May 2009.
<http://www.polskiinternet.com/english/info/wedding.html>

¹⁹¹ Polish American Congress. “Polish Weddings.” No date.
<http://geocities.com/musetti.geo/polwedding.html>

¹⁹² PolskiInternet.com. “Polish Traditions and Customs: Wedding Traditions.” May 2009.
<http://www.polskiinternet.com/english/info/wedding.html>

¹⁹³ PolskiInternet.com. “Polish Traditions and Customs: Wedding Traditions.” May 2009.
<http://www.polskiinternet.com/english/info/wedding.html>

Funerals¹⁹⁴

Christian funerals, which predominate in Poland, share certain assumptions with similar funerals in other countries. Fundamentally, there is the belief—according to Roman Catholic dogma—that the dead will resurrect and their souls will continue on in an everlasting life.¹⁹⁵

The Catholic Church states in its creed, recited at every Mass, that this resurrection will happen and that following the resurrection, the dead will be judged by

God. Funerary traditions in Poland are organized around these Roman Catholic Christian beliefs (based in Latin rites) although in the past they retained certain folk traditions unique to Poland, elements of which still exist.



Exchange 19: I would like to give my condolences.

Soldier:	I would like to give my condolences to you and your family.	proshen pshiyonch virazi vspoowchoochya dla tsawey rodzyeeny
Local:	Thank you.	dzyenkooyen

Because peasants in Poland had an uneasiness and even dread about the body of a deceased person, they tried to smooth and assist the process of dying itself so that the spirits of the dead could depart quickly. They used holy water and herbs that had been blessed, and candles placed around the body to light the way for the departing spirit. After a person died, it was customary to open windows so the soul could easily leave the house. They stopped clocks and turned mirrors toward the wall so that the departing spirit could not see its reflection. They also dressed the deceased in the finest clothing available in order that he or she could be well-presented in the presence of God and for the final judgment.

In modern times, and especially in the countryside where older traditions still prevail, the family lays out the corpse



¹⁹⁴ Google Books. Deck-Partyka, Alicja. *Poland, a Unique Country & Its People* [pp. 300–01]. 2006. http://books.google.com/books?id=3C8JR8Gv3AkC&pg=PA300&lpg=PA300&dq=funeral+customs+in+Poland&source=bl&ots=IXdeYGLBPj&sig=vuLqQjNK2NxECU_dgyTvfqXW1Qk&hl=en&ei=gDzySb_5Hp2gtgOXyfXUCg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2

¹⁹⁵ If I Should Die.co.uk. “Religious Traditions and Beliefs: Christian Funerals.” c. 2009. <http://www.ifishouldie.co.uk/religious-traditions-and-beliefs-c37.html>

at home and surrounds the coffin with candles. Family members watch over the body until the time of the funeral. A wake takes place the evening before the funeral at which those present sing funeral dirges (solemn songs). Following prayers on the funeral day, pallbearers carry the coffin out of the house with the deceased's feet leaving the house first so that the temptation to return will not arise. While departing, those carrying the coffin often follow an old tradition of rapping the coffin down against the doorstep three times in order to bid goodbye to any domestic spirits who are present in the house.

Exchange 20: Please be strong.

Soldier:	Please be strong.	moosheeche teraz bich motsnee
Local:	Yes, thank you.	Tak.

A funeral service is held in church. On the way to the cemetery afterward, the procession of people stops for a member of the funeral party to deliver a funeral oration at a designated religious site, such as a shrine. After this event, the guests and family members go home. The family later holds a *stypa*, or feast, in honor of the deceased. Ritual foods that are traditionally served include grain, symbolizing regeneration because it grows or is reborn out of the earth. Honey is also part of the dinner, symbolizing reunion with God, and poppy seeds, which symbolize “good sleep.”¹⁹⁶

Do's and Don'ts

Do be aware of all official regulations and follow them.

Do remove head gear if you are a man before entering a Roman Catholic Church.

Do not sit with you ankle across your knee.

Do not criticize or show any disrespect to Polish officials, citizens, or their country.

Do not criticize or show any disrespect to the Roman Catholic Church in Poland.

Do not stare at or engage in overt expressions of affection with the opposite sex.

¹⁹⁶ Deck-Partyka, Alicja. *Poland, a Unique Country & Its People* [pp. 301]. 2006. http://books.google.com/books?id=3C8JR8Gv3AkC&pg=PA300&lpg=PA300&dq=funeral+customs+in+Poland&source=bl&ots=IXdeYGLBPj&sig=vuLqQjNK2NxECU_dgyTvfgXW1Qk&hl=en&ei=gDzySb_5Hp2gtgOXyfXUCg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2

Do not stand around casually with your hands in your pockets.

Do not point to anybody with a finger. Use the entire *right* hand instead.

Do not point upward with the middle finger. It is obscene in the U.S. and equally so in Poland.

Do not use obscene or indecent language within earshot of Polish citizens. Many may be familiar with American slang.

Urban Life

Pattern of Urbanization

Poland's population began to urbanize in the 1940s, particularly after World War II ended when the need to reconstruct cities and the national infrastructure was critical. The communist government's push to industrialize the country, together with its plans to nationalize the economy, also stimulated the migration toward the cities. The government established the first Six-Year Plan in 1950 in order to quickly develop heavy industry and bring the economy under central control. Correspondingly, a modern working class formed in urban areas to sustain industrial job growth.¹⁹⁷ From 1947 to 1958, a 10% increase occurred each year in the number of jobs that shifted from the agricultural to the urban industrial sector.¹⁹⁸



The growth of cities was rapid during this period. Slightly over 72% of Poland's population was designated rural in 1931. Of those people, approximately 60% relied completely on agriculture as a means to earn a living. By 1978, the situation had changed dramatically as the percentage of the rural population had dropped to just over 42%. Further, only around 22% of those who lived in the countryside now relied on agriculture for their economic support.¹⁹⁹

The rural-to-urban movement stabilized, and now, approximately 61% of Polish people live in the cities.²⁰⁰ This ratio is lower than in other Western European countries, where urbanization has been greater. As Poland's economy grows, the migration from rural to urban areas is expected to increase.²⁰¹ Many of the people now living on the fringes of the industrial areas of Poland have benefitted from both sectors through the years. Living

¹⁹⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. A Country Study: Poland. Pease, Neal. Chapter 1 - Historical Setting. "The Polish People's Republic - From Stalinism to the Polish October." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

¹⁹⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. A Country Study: Poland. Chapter 2 - The Society and Its Environment. "The Working Classes: Industrial Workers." October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

¹⁹⁹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. Poland: A Country Study. Curtis, Glenn E. Chapter 2 - The Society and Its Environment. "Demography: Population Density and Distribution." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

²⁰⁰ CIA World Factbook. Poland. "People - Poland." 14 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/PL.html>

²⁰¹ Nordic Building Forum. "Urbanization, Growth of Cities and Business Investment in Poland." 2004. http://nordisk-byggedag.dk/images/NBDK_Folder_2004.pdf

on rural farms, some family members commute to work in local factories, while other family members stay at home to produce income through farming.²⁰²

Unemployment and Other Labor Issues

After the fall of communism, which took place in Poland around the same time as in Russia, industrial output declined and many Poles were thrown out of work. In the mining and manufacturing sectors, production decreased by one-third after prices were removed from central control.²⁰³ By the mid 1990s, however, manufacturing and other sectors began to increase their productivity, and unemployment dropped.



The Polish economy has fluctuated, slowing in 2003 as unemployment increased to over 18%, then recovering somewhat after Poland joined the European Union (EU) in 2004.²⁰⁴ Since then, Poland's economy has been relatively stable and fast-growing compared to other EU countries.²⁰⁵ In particular, it has shown resistance to the global recession of 2008–09, with unemployment rates beginning to drop in 2008. At the same time, Poland's EU membership resulted in a loss of workers, since many traveled to other EU member nations in search of jobs with stronger career potential. This is especially true among skilled manufacturing workers and technical specialists.²⁰⁶ Since 2008, fewer workers have had to leave the country to try to find jobs in other EU countries, although there are signs that unemployment is rising again because of the global downturn.^{207, 208}

Polish workers have some job protection by being able to voluntarily participate in labor unions. They may form a union if at least ten employees are involved. Workers are not exposed to risk or penalty for being active in unions; their participation is legal and protected.²⁰⁹ However, unions in Poland have limitations, and many technical staff in

²⁰² Encyclopædia Britannica. "Poland: People - Settlement Patterns." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28233>

²⁰³ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Poland: Economy - Manufacturing." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28250>

²⁰⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Poland: Economy." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28242>

²⁰⁵ Bloomberg.com. Andrusz, Katya, and Monika Rozlal. "Poland Posted Second-Fastest EU Growth in 1st Quarter." 29 May 2009.

http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601085&sid=aQw8Imt_xUA0&refer=europe

²⁰⁶ Eurofound. "Impact of Emigration on Labour Supply in Domestic Labour Market." 25 June 2008.

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/2008/04/PL0804019I.htm>

²⁰⁷ CNN.com. "Life After Communism." 19 May 2009.

<http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/europe/09/29/poland.profile/>

²⁰⁸ The New York Times. Dempsey, Judy, and Alison Smale. "President of Poland Is Sanguine on Economy." 11 March 2009.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/12/world/europe/12poland.html?_r=1&fta=y

²⁰⁹ EURES. The European Job Mobility Portal. "Living and Working Conditions: Poland – Working Conditions, Representation of Workers." August 2008.

particular have not been able to find jobs in Poland that provide the working conditions they demand. Thus, they have often sought more lucrative positions with foreign companies since 2004. This trend may be changing in some areas of the economy because some Polish companies are able to offer higher salaries and better working conditions. Particularly in fields such as information technology and construction, many employees have been returning to Poland to find jobs.²¹⁰

Urban Lifestyle

Cultural events in Poland exist primarily in larger cities and are a major form of recreation or entertainment. In cities, there are many opportunities to attend concerts, theater performances, cinema, museums, and other artistic events. Polish museums display art from modern as well as ancient times. Paintings by Leonardo da Vinci and Rembrandt are part of the collection at the National Museum in Kraków, and Hans Memling's famous painting, *The Last Judgment*, is in the National Museum at Gdańsk. Admission fees are low, or sometimes free, so viewing art is affordable to people of all backgrounds. Various kinds of theater—musical, opera, contemporary, and national performances—are also found in Warsaw, Kraków, Gdańsk, and elsewhere. Musical festivals and open-air concerts as well as cinemas that show both commercially popular and specialized foreign movies are available in the cities.²¹¹ Although Polish people have less money to spend on recreation than the citizens of other EU countries, the low cost of admission to many of these cultural events or entertainment makes them more accessible to urban dwellers.^{212, 213}



In urban areas, both adult members of a married household must often work to support their families. Many people in the cities hold industrial jobs, and social stratification has decreased greatly since World War II, but a middle class has also formed. Among its members are people who practice a trade or hold management or professional positions.

<http://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=8514&acro=living&lang=en&parentId=7791&countryId=PL&living=>

²¹⁰ Eurofound. "Impact of Emigration on Labour Supply in Domestic Labour Market." 25 June 2008.

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/2008/04/PL0804019I.htm>

²¹¹ EURES. The European Job Mobility Portal. "Living and Working Conditions: Poland – Cultural and Social Life." August 2008.

<http://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=8844&acro=living&lang=en&parentId=7824&countryId=PL&living=>

²¹² EURES. The European Job Mobility Portal. "Living and Working Conditions: Poland – Living Conditions." August 2008.

<http://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=8712&acro=living&lang=en&parentId=7824&countryId=PL&living=>

²¹³ EURES. The European Job Mobility Portal. "Living and Working Conditions: Poland – Cultural and Social Life." August 2008.

<http://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=8844&acro=living&lang=en&parentId=7824&countryId=PL&living=>

Educational opportunity is one advantage of living in the cities, where it is more widely available compared to rural parts of Poland.

Although social networks were traditionally more extensive in rural areas, Polish people have maintained strong social and family ties under a variety of circumstances. In the cities, they keep in touch with friends and neighbors by calling and visiting frequently.

Exchange 21: What is your telephone number?

Soldier:	What is your telephone number?	yakee yest vash noomer telefonoo?
Local:	My phone number is 650-123-765.	mooy noomer to: sheyset pyendzyeshont - sto dvadzyeshcha tshi - shyedemset sheshdzyeshont pyench

Urban Living Conditions

In the cities, most people live in flats or apartments, and they depend on public transportation to get around, although an increasing number of people possess their own automobiles. Thousands of functionally-styled apartments were constructed in the 1950s and 60s on the outskirts of Warsaw, which was mostly destroyed in World War II. The majority of people live in these suburban apartments. Those who could afford to pay more live in single-family houses and apartments built there in the 1990s during a construction boom that was a response to an extreme housing shortage. Private home ownership increased greatly during this period. Kraków, Gdańsk, and other cities have some similarities to Warsaw in that suburbs were also built in the 20th century, characterized by “poor-quality apartment-style housing, as well as newer (post-1990) subdivisions of single-family dwellings.”^{214, 215}



Apartments built in the mid 20th century, and more recent ones as well, are usually very small, with limited family recreation areas, if any, and little room for children to play. Aside from a bathroom and kitchen, there may be only 2 or 3 rooms for living space. The flats are connected to public utilities, including water, electricity, gas, and central heating. It is common for residents’ workplaces to be located a distance from their apartments or

²¹⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. “People – Settlement Patterns – Urban Settlement.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28235>

²¹⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. “Government and Society - Housing.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-256684>

homes, and they typically commute using mass transportation, which is cheaper than maintaining automobiles.²¹⁶

In 2003, a market-based competition among Poland’s telecommunications systems was finalized. This competition has led to the modernization of the communications infrastructure in Polish cities.²¹⁷

Exchange 22: May I use your phone?

Soldier:	May I use your phone?	chi mogen skozhistach z panyskyego telefonoo?
Local:	Sure.	ochiveeshchyhe

In particular, wireless networks have been growing rapidly. Three networks have provided service in the country since 1993, and a fourth began operating in 2006. In most of the country, cell-phone service functions well, with the exception of some service gaps in the eastern region.²¹⁸



Health Care

Today, Poland’s Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has jurisdiction over the various regional governments’ health departments. The facilities that the ministry oversees include hospitals, clinics, and ambulance services as well as rest homes, sanatoriums, and health spas.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Everyculture.com. Culture of Poland. “Urbanism, Architecture, and the Use of Space.” c. 2007.

<http://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Poland.html>

²¹⁷ CIA World Factbook. “Poland.” 14 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/PL.html>

²¹⁸ CIA World Factbook. “Poland.” 14 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/PL.html>

²¹⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. “Government and Society – Health and Welfare.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-256684>

Exchange 23: Is the doctor in?

Soldier:	Is Dr. Nowak in, sir?	chi doktor novak yest oo shyebye?
Local:	Yes.	tak

Poland's modern health system operates within a combined structure of "public and private social care and supplementary private healthcare."²²⁰ This mixed system is the result of major health care reforms that the government began in 1999. The reforms followed a chaotic period of transition that took place after communism fell, ushering in privatization of formerly government-sponsored health and dental services. Under the communist government, free treatment was available to invalids, retirees, students, and workers and their families. However, after this widely-available service ended, certain health problems arose among the population, such as psychological disorders and influenza, even as other diseases declined statistically. In order to reduce the strain on the health care system, the government set out to make it more efficient.²²¹



Exchange 24: Do you know what is wrong?

Soldier:	Do you know what is wrong?	nye vye pa tso shyen stawo?
Local:	No.	nye

²²⁰ EURES. The European Job Mobility Portal. "Living and Working Conditions: Living Conditions, Health Systems." August 2008.
<http://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=8778&acro=living&lang=en&parentId=7824&countryId=PL&living=>

²²¹ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Government and Society – Health and Welfare." 2009.
<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-256684>

Under the current system, people in Poland are entitled various levels of publicly funded health care, known as the National Health Fund. Many must contribute to the cost of care, including employees of a company, or people who are self employed. Retirees, unemployed people, students, and many others are also required to contribute to treatment costs. They are free to choose a provider who has contracted with the National Health Fund.²²²



© meaduva / flickr.com
Purchasing medications in Poland

Health benefits are quite comprehensive. They include services designed to preserve health, provide nursing care, limit disability, prevent disease and detect it in early stages, and treat illness, disease, or drug addiction.

Exchange 25: Is there a hospital nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a hospital nearby?	chi yest gdzyesh f poblezhoo yakeesh shpeetal?
Local:	Yes, in the center of town.	tak, f tsentroom myasta

Drugs must be prescribed by practitioners authorized by the National Health Fund. Otherwise, the patient must pay the full cost.²²³

Education

Attendance in school is compulsory in Poland from ages 7 through 18. Reformed in 1999, the school system starts with pre-school (also called nursery), followed by six primary grades. Secondary school is divided into three years of lower secondary (grades 7–9) and, after a completion certificate is obtained, upper-level secondary school. The curriculum at this level varies and can



© Betsy Devine
Polish students in class

²²² EURES. The European Job Mobility Portal. “Living and Working Conditions: Living Conditions, Health Systems.” August 2008.
<http://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=8778&acro=living&lang=en&parentId=7824&countryId=PL&living=>

²²³ EURES. The European Job Mobility Portal. “Living and Working Conditions: Living Conditions, Health Systems.” August 2008.
<http://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=8778&acro=living&lang=en&parentId=7824&countryId=PL&living=>

include technical and vocational training, or college preparatory. After students pass vocational school, they can enter the labor market. Alternatively, those who take college preparatory classes have the option of attending college and specializing in medicine, military science, or humanities.^{224, 225}

Several renowned universities are located in Poland. The Jagiellon University in Kraków was founded in 1364 and the University of Warsaw in 1818. Another institute of higher learning, the Polish Academy of Sciences, has branches in other countries and is known for its research institutes. Finally, among prominent colleges in Poland, the Catholic University of Lublin was the sole private university in the entire Soviet bloc between 1945 and 1989.²²⁶

The Polish people have achieved almost 100% literacy (defined as those over the age of 15 who are able to read and write). The rate is virtually equal between men and women.²²⁷

Transportation and Traffic²²⁸

Poland has a well-developed system of public transportation. Buses operate in the cities including outlying suburban areas. In large cities, they run at night. Trams also operate in cities, and an underground metro that runs from early morning until approximately 11 p.m. is a popular means of transportation in Warsaw.²²⁹



²²⁴ EURES. The European Job Mobility Portal. “Living and Working Conditions: Living Conditions, Educational Systems.” August 2008. EURES. The European Job Mobility Portal. “Living and Working Conditions: Living Conditions, Health Systems.” August 2008. <http://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=8778&acro=living&lang=en&parentId=7824&countryId=PL&living=>

²²⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. “Government and Society – Education.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28266>

²²⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. “Government and Society – Education.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28266>

²²⁷ CIA World Factbook. “Poland: People.” 14 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/PL.html>

²²⁸ EURES. The European Job Mobility Portal. “Living and Working Conditions: Living Conditions, Transport.” August 2008. EURES. The European Job Mobility Portal. “Living and Working Conditions: Living Conditions, Health Systems.” August 2008. <http://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=8910&acro=living&lang=en&parentId=7824&countryId=PL&living=>

²²⁹ Australians – Study in Europe. “Everyday Life in Poland: Transport.” c. 2008. <http://www.asie.unimelb.edu.au/poland/everydaypoland.html>

Exchange 26: Will the bus be here soon?

Soldier:	Will the bus be here soon?	chi aootoboos fkroottse bendzye?
Local:	Yes.	tak

Travelers can purchase tickets in underground stations, at kiosks, in some shops, and from bus drivers. Different kinds of tickets are available to accommodate a variety of schedules—hourly, daily, monthly, and other options. Also, some tickets are interchangeable and can be used when riding a bus, the underground, or a tram.

Many people own cars or have access to them, and prefer private driving to public transportation.

Exchange 27: Which road leads to the airport?

Soldier:	Which road leads to the airport?	ktoorendi mozhna doyeHach do lotneeska?
Local:	The road heading east.	ton shoson na fsHood

Drivers, however, must contend with roadways that were not well-built and have not been very well maintained. The Polish government did not adopt European building standards for highways until the 1990s, and approximately one third of the roads are not paved. Still, traffic densities are often high in Warsaw. Roads have been built in the city to accommodate the increasingly heavy urban traffic, and to provide a link to other cities.²³⁰



© Christopher Morris
Taxis line up in Kraków

Gas stations located on international routes are generally open 24 hours a day.²³¹ For those who want to rent a car, this option is available at airports and car rental agencies

²³⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Economy – Transportation and Telecommunications - Highways." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28255>

located in cities. In addition, taxis operate in most towns and cities. Bargaining for a lower taxi fare is optional and may save some money. If the taxi service is unregulated, the passenger should not get into the cab without first asking for a price quote.²³²

Exchange 28: Where can I rent a car?

Soldier:	Where can I rent a car?	gdzye mozhna vinayonch yakeesh samoHood?
Local:	Downtown.	v tsentroom myasta

The highway system has been disproportionately developed throughout the country. On the western side, where the land was controlled by Germany for many years, the road network was quite dense. In areas controlled by Russia, however, just the opposite situation prevailed; roads were fewer and poorly developed.



© Andy Sedik
Polish gas station

Between 1918 and 1935, and also after 1945, the state invested in projects to equalize and upgrade the pattern of roads throughout the country. More modern, multilane highways came into use during this period.²³³

Exchange 29: Is there a gas station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a gas station nearby?	chi yest f poblezhoo yakash statsya benzinova?
Local:	Yes.	tak

Railway travel is another very popular means of transportation in Poland. High-speed trains connect the larger cities, and Polish State Railways maintains the system, also

²³¹ World Travel Guide. Poland. "Getting Around by Road." c. 2009.

http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/226/internal_travel/Europe/Poland.html

²³² About.com. Eastern Europe Travel. Kubilius, Kerry. "Top Six Tips for Haggling in Eastern Europe." c. 2009. <http://goeasteurope.about.com/od/introtoeasteuropetravel/tp/haggling.htm>

²³³ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Economy – Transportation and Telecommunications - Highways." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28255>

operating light rail in over 12 cities.²³⁴ Direct lines connect Polish cities to European cities, and daily express trains run between Prague (Czechoslovakia) and Warsaw or Kraków.²³⁵ The express lines with few stops charge higher fares than the slow trains that operate more in rural areas, stopping at all stations.

Similar to the pattern of development with roadways, railway networks also developed unevenly depending on which sector of the country they were located. Being divided between Germany, Russia, and Austria, Poland's three regions experienced different political and economic conditions. This divergent base directly affected the transportation and communication systems in the region as well as the entire infrastructure. Railway lines in particular were centered at each of the regional capitals. Some were funded better than others, and more dense networks appeared in those regions.



© Christopher Walker
Passenger train

Exchange 30: Is there a train station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a train station nearby?	chi yest too f poblezhoo statsya koleyova?
Local:	No.	nye

Newly independent Poland took over the entire system in 1918, redesigning and rebuilding in accordance with European standards. Important lines linked Warsaw to Kraków and Poznan. Also constructed was a coal shipping line that linked the mining region of Silesia, in southwestern Poland, with a new seaport.²³⁶

World War II destroyed much of the railway system in Poland. It was rebuilt after the war, and heavily used lines were converted to use electric power. After the communist era, however, both passenger and shipping demand dropped for the use of railroads. Specifically, in the 1990s, shipping by rail dropped by 41% and passenger usage of railways decreased by 58%.²³⁷ In the



© gingerpig2000 / flickr.com
Ferry service on the Vistula river

²³⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Economy – Transportation and Telecommunications - Railways." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28254>

²³⁵ Lonely Planet. Poland – Getting There & Away. "Land – Train." c. 2009. <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/poland/transport/getting-there-away>

²³⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Economy – Transportation and Telecommunications - Railways." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28254>

²³⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. "Economy – Transportation and Telecommunications - Railways." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28254>

first years of the 21st century, Polish State Railways, the system administrator, began to privatize the railways.

Poland’s waterways provide another important means of transport. Car ferry service connects Gdańsk and Świnoujście to Denmark and Sweden. Ferries run daily on weekdays, or sometimes only on Saturdays, depending on the line.²³⁸

Exchange 31: Can you take me there?

Soldier:	Can you take me there?	mozhe mnye pan tam zabrach?
Local:	Yes, I can.	tak, proshen

A considerable amount of shipping takes place by sea, connecting to Poland’s three largest seaports: Szczecin (the largest port), Gdańsk, and Gdynia.

Restaurants and Marketplace

*Restaurants*²³⁹

In Poland’s cities, there are many restaurants that appeal to different tastes and eating styles.



Exchange 32: I’d like some hot soup.

Soldier:	I’d like some hot soup.	poproshen yakonsh gorontson zoope
Local:	Sure.	bardzo proshen

Although Polish food is sometimes considered limited in range, it offers a number of well-known, unique national specialties. They include *pierogi* (boiled dumplings), rich soups, and pastries such as apple cake and poppy seed cake.

²³⁸ Lonely Planet. Poland – Getting There & Away. “Sea.” c. 2009.
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/poland/transport/getting-there-away>

²³⁹ World Travel Guide. “Going Out - Poland.” c. 2009.
<http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/226/entertainment/Europe/Poland.html>

Exchange 33: Do you have a dessert?

Soldier:	Do you have a dessert?	chi machye yakeesh deseri?
Local:	Yes, we have fresh cheesecake.	tak, mami shvyezhi sernyeek

Specialties include a great variety of fish dishes using carp, trout, and herring. Meat is often used as stuffing, sometimes with cabbage or other vegetables. It is also used to prepare a variety of sausages. If in doubt about the kind of meat being served, it's a good idea to simply ask the waiter.

Exchange 34: What type of meat is this?

Soldier:	What type of meat is this?	tso to za myenso?
Local:	Lamb.	baranyeena

Most restaurants offer a variety of drinks, including vodka and beer, both national drinks. Poland is well-known for the production of several different kinds of beer. Similar to beer, vodka is also prepared in a variety of ways, characterized by its many unique flavors according to the ingredients used to make it.



© micamonkey / flickr.com
Polish Beer

Exchange 35: I would like coffee or tea.

Soldier:	I would like coffee or tea.	proshen kave loop herbate
Local:	Sure.	ochiveeshchye

Different foods are typically served at different times of day. For instance, after an early breakfast, people do not usually eat again until around 4 p.m., when they eat a small lunch or dinner that consists of two courses (usually soup and another more substantive

dish). Lunch breaks are not part of the normal work day in Poland. Around 7 or 8 p.m., it is customary to eat a small meal that may consist only of something light, such as yogurt or a sandwich.²⁴⁰

Exchange 36: Are you still serving breakfast?

Soldier:	Are you still serving breakfast?	chi mozhna yeshche zamooveech shnyadanye?
Local:	Yes.	tak

A group of people eating at a restaurant may wish to pay their bills separately or put it all on one tab. Just let the waiter know in advance which way you wish to proceed.



© Thomas Jung
A dinner party in Poland

Exchange 37: Put this all in one bill.

Soldier:	Put this all in one bill.	vshistko bendzye na yeden raHoonek
Local:	Okay.	dobzhe

Customers should also find out in advance what method of payment is accepted and have that payment available when they ask for the bill. Hotel restaurants or urban upscale restaurants in general usually take major international credit cards. It's a good idea to have cash on hand, however, just in case other payment methods don't work. If a restaurant doesn't accept credit cards, they are still useful for getting cash advances at banks. The most widely honored card to use for this purpose is Visa.²⁴¹



© ChrisFzik
Zywiec neon sign

²⁴⁰ Australians – Study in Europe. “Everyday Life in Poland: Poland From the Foreign Point of View.” c. 2008. <http://www.asie.unimelb.edu.au/poland/everydaypoland.html>

²⁴¹ Lonely Planet. Poland – Practical Information. “Money: Credit Cards.” c. 2009. <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/poland/practical-information/money-costs>

Exchange 38: Can I have my total bill, please?

Soldier:	Can I have my total bill, please?	raHoonek proshen?
Local:	Yes, of course.	tak, ocheveeshchye

Tipping and Miscellaneous Costs

Leaving a tip of 10–15% is a standard practice in restaurants in Poland.²⁴² In informal restaurants or cafes where customers serve themselves, however, tipping is not necessary. For other services, such as porters at train stations and in hotels, tipping is common. The amount in these cases is at the discretion of the traveler.



© Gary Scott
Pay toilet in Poland

In some bars and restaurants, it may be necessary to pay to use the toilet.²⁴³

Exchange 39: Where is your restroom?

Soldier:	Where is your restroom?	gdzye tu yest toaleta?
Local:	That room to your left, over there.	oh, tamte djvee po levey

²⁴² World Travel Guide. “Going Out - Poland.” c. 2009.
<http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/226/entertainment/Europe/Poland.html>

²⁴³ Australians – Study in Europe. “Everyday Life in Poland: Poland From the Foreign Point of View.” c. 2008. <http://www.asie.unimelb.edu.au/poland/everydaypoland.html>

Marketplace

Many marketplaces and bazaars (outdoor selling stalls) can be found across the nation in Poland's cities.

Exchange 40: Is the bazaar nearby?

Soldier:	Is the bazaar nearby?	chi yest too yakyesh targoveesko?
Local:	Yes, over there on the right.	tak, tam na pravo

Bazaars typically carry craft goods such as woodcarvings, handwoven rugs, enamelware, and handmade jewelry embellished with silver and amber. Amber in particular is widely available around Gdańsk in the northern part of the country. It is sold in various forms, from hand carved necklaces to unaltered pieces of raw amber.²⁴⁴



At St. Dominic's Fair held in Gdańsk in August, vendors set up stalls throughout the city center. People come here to shop for crafts and souvenirs, including sculptures, designs made of cloth, old books and antiques, and jewelry made of gold, silver, coral, and amber. While vendors are selling goods, street entertainers and musicians provide tourists with unique performances.²⁴⁵

Exchange 41: Do you sell wicker baskets?

Soldier:	Do you sell wicker baskets?	chi spshedaye pan koshikee veekleenove?
Local:	Yes.	tak

²⁴⁴ World Travel Guide. "Going Out – Poland: Shopping." c. 2009. <http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/226/entertainment/Europe/Poland.html>

²⁴⁵ Polska. Official Promotional Website of the Republic of Poland. "City Entertainment: Souvenirs of Poland." c. 2002–08. <http://www.poland.gov.pl/City,Entertainment,409.html>

Even though regulations require sellers in bazaars to display their prices, bargaining is common in Poland. In general, negotiating prices is an accepted practice in Eastern Europe or countries that have been part of the Eastern bloc. When trying to bargain in these areas, and particularly in Poland, politeness will go a long way toward making a fair purchase. Also, as part of the negotiation process, buyers need to have a clear idea in mind as to what an item is worth before they make the purchase.^{246, 247}



© Ilana Tamir
Negotiating at a flea market, Kraków

When trying to determine the quality of merchandise, especially when it's expensive, a buyer should ask to examine an item closely to be sure that the quality and price are reasonably aligned.

Exchange 42: May I examine this close up?

Soldier:	May I examine this close up?	chi mogen obeyzhech to z bleeska?
Local:	Sure.	ochiveeshchye

Shoppers and collectors need to be aware that they cannot automatically take artwork or books out of the country if such items are dated earlier than 1945. They must first obtain official permission to do so. If the request concerns artwork, they can contact the Voivodeship Conservation Office for Historic Monuments. For books dated pre-1945, buyers should get permission from the National Library in Warsaw by registering an application to export books.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ About.com. Eastern Europe Travel. Kubilius, Kerry. "Top Six Tips for Haggling in Eastern Europe." c. 2009. <http://goeasteurope.about.com/od/introtoeasteuropetravel/tp/haggling.htm>

²⁴⁷ The Visitor. "Poland: Bargaining and Tipping." May 2009. <http://www.thevisitor.pl/index.php?id=184>

²⁴⁸ Polska. Official Promotional Website of the Republic of Poland. "City Entertainment: Souvenirs of Poland." c. 2002–08. <http://www.poland.gov.pl/City,Entertainment,409.html>

Exchange 43: Can I buy a carpet with this much money?

Soldier:	Can I buy a carpet with this much money?	chi moogwbim koopeeche tkani obroos za te pyenyondze?
Local:	No.	nye

If a vendor approaches a customer to try to make a sale, quoting a price that seems too high, the customer should either look uninterested or just walk away. There is no obligation to buy goods, even after browsing and asking about prices. Since prices vary considerably, a buyer can always shop around and return to the establishment where he or she can find the best deal.



Exchange 44: How much longer will you be here?

Soldier:	How much longer will you be here?	yak dwoogo yeshche pan too bendzye?
Local:	Three more hours.	yakyesh tshi godzeeni yeshche

Food is available at numerous street stalls in the cities. The food is generally safe to eat. As with U.S. food stalls, complaints of problems with the food result in closure of the enterprise.²⁴⁹

Exchange 45: May I have a glass of water?

Soldier:	May I have a glass of water?	poproshen trohe void?
Local:	Yes, right away.	tak, za hfeelen

²⁴⁹ The Visitor. "Poland: Eating Out in Poland." May 2009. <http://www.thevisitor.pl/index.php?id=187>

It is a good rule of thumb to establish in advance the kind of currency a seller or shopkeeper will accept. Although as a member of the EU, Poland has announced its decision to adopt the *euro* as currency, its official currency for now remains the *zloty*. This is the preferred form of payment in many establishments or small shops, so it's necessary to keep different denominations on hand. Some businesses also accept credit cards. Travelers can exchange foreign currency at change bureaus known as *kantors*, found in department stores, train stations, post offices, travel agencies, and hotels. Their transactions are limited to exchanges of cash only.²⁵⁰



Exchange 46: Do you accept U.S. currency?

Soldier:	Do you accept U.S. currency?	chi mogen zapwacheech dolaramee?
Local:	No we only accept zloty.	nyesteti nye, pshymooyemi tilko zwote

A buyer may have a currency denomination that seems too large for the cost of the item being purchased. In that case, asking in advance whether the seller can give change is advisable in order to avoid the inconvenience of not having the money on hand.

Exchange 47: Can you give me change for this?

Soldier:	Can you give me change for this?	chi mozhe mee pan to rozmyeneech?
Local:	No.	nye

ATMs are widely available in Polish cities.

²⁵⁰ Lonely Planet. Poland – Practical Information. “Money.” c. 2009.
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/poland/practical-information/money-costs>

Dealing with Beggars

Some beggars live and work in Polish cities. Often these are people from poor, rural areas who have moved there in search of jobs but are reduced to begging as a profession when they cannot find work. Among them are Roma (Gypsies) from Romania, although they are not present in large numbers in Poland.²⁵¹



© Arkadiusz Karpiński
A beggar in Kraków

It is best to ignore beggars and to not give out money. If others are around, they will quickly congregate when they see someone handing out money. This situation should be avoided, for they are likely to aggressively demand attention.

Exchange 48: Give me money!

Local:	Give me money!	davay pyenyondze!
Soldier:	I don't have any.	nye mam pyenyendzi

A beggar or seller may be insistent on making a sale to you, even after you say that you are not interested. If this happens, the best solution is to simply say “I’m sorry, I have no money” and just keep walking, avoiding eye contact.

Exchange 49: Please, buy something from me.

Local:	Please, buy something from me.	nyeh pan tsosh ode mnye koopee
Soldier:	Sorry, I have no money left.	pshikro mee, ale nye mam yoosh pyenyendzi

²⁵¹ Google Books. *Poverty, Ethnicity, and Gender in Eastern Europe during the Market Transition* [p. 115]. Emigh, Rebecca Jean, and Iván Széleányi. 2001. http://books.google.com/books?id=O_tXHTK2kQUC&pg=PA115&lpg=PA115&dq=poverty+in+Polish+cities&source=bl&ots=fRs-fQpuVC&sig=9DVLAVnkTQ9JEb_SAkamGNXo8Ys&hl=en&ei=UVkoSs3tF8WLTgeRIL2gAQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4

Rural Life

Rural Economy

Historical Overview

After World War II, many people left the countryside for the city, trying to find jobs in an economy that was beginning to industrialize. Farming lost its status as a traditional occupation as young people moved away, and the population that remained behind was aging, struggling with the hard work required to keep the farmlands productive. Many of the industrial workers in the centrally planned economy of the new Communist government saw gains in their living standards along with more educational opportunities. However, as the command economy became more inefficient and bureaucratic, failing to lead to business innovation or economic progress, the workers' economic gains were lost. Industrial unemployment was high after the Communist government fell and a free-market economy resulted in the restructuring of businesses and financial sectors.²⁵² Because of this, many urban workers returned to rural areas in the hope that they could once again earn a living from farming.



Exchange 50: Do you own this land?

Soldier:	Do you own this land?	chi pan yest vwashcheecheylem tey zyemee?
Local:	Yes.	tak

Rural Land Policy under Communism

In the countryside, the communist regime confiscated the largest estates and redistributed the land. Early attempts to collectivize the land resulted in sharp decreases in farm production; thousands of farmers were forced to leave their lands. This change led to a collapse of the entire collectivization effort in the early 1950s. At that time, collective

²⁵² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Poland: A Country Study*. Curtis, Glenn E. Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment. “The Social Order: The Working Classes.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://leweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

farms comprised only 6% of the total number of farms in Poland. The experiment “fostered a permanent resistance among peasants to direct state interference.”²⁵³

In the final 30 years of the Communist regime, small family farms were the enduring feature of Poland’s agricultural sector. They declined in number, however, and by the mid 1980s, just half of all Polish people who lived in rural areas were still farming; the remainder worked in towns and commuted to their jobs.²⁵⁴



© Em and Ernie / flickr.com
Neglected farm

Post-Communist Rural Conditions

Rural conditions remained bleak in post-Communist Poland. There were few sewage lines and often no retail stores. Only half of the villages could be reached by paved roads. Peasants in general had been excluded from receiving the social welfare benefits that the government offered to industrial workers. These disadvantages caused thousands of people to migrate to the cities, and led to the collapse of the rural, multigenerational extended family system.

Modern Farming and the European Union

In 2004, Poland joined the European Union, and new policies to regulate markets and increase income came into place, affecting most aspects of agriculture in Poland. Through the centuries, Polish farmers have operated small farms, growing enough crops for sustenance but not for market production. They traditionally followed sustainable farming traditions geared toward ensuring survival of their farms. These included common stewardship of the land, and in later years, self-financing, planting of standard crops, use of horses and tractors to till the ground, and employing small-scale, conservative practices that minimized risk. However, these practices also created ecological problems, such as improper storage of fodder and manure (used as fertilizer), with subsequent loss of nutrients and runoff that polluted water sources.²⁵⁵ To modernize farming practices and resolve these and other problems, the government in 2004 began to enforce EU policies that mandated inspections, restructured farms, and imposed regulations designed to make farming more efficient and productive. This process, however, has not developed without controversy.



© Ahorcado / flickr.com
Modern industrial farm

²⁵³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Poland: A Country Study*. Curtis, Glenn E. Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment. “The Social Order: The Working Classes – Agricultural Workers.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

²⁵⁴ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Poland: A Country Study*. Curtis, Glenn E. Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment. “The Social Order: The Working Classes – Agricultural Workers.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

²⁵⁵ FAO. “Poland: Natural Conditions, Farming Traditions, Agricultural Structures.” No date. <http://www.fao.org/regional/seur/Review/Poland.htm>

EU practices in Poland that began in 2004 are replacing old traditions and implementing changes for the better. However, large-scale, highly regulated mechanized farming is also being adopted in Poland, with repercussions that aren't always positive. In a large number of cases, the industrialized factory farms are eliminating small, traditional family farms, and mechanization has decreased the need for farm laborers, throwing many out of work. In addition, much of the land has been sold to foreign owners with results that fail to represent local interests. Biodiversity has sometimes been threatened by current and proposed farming policies. One example, some large industrial hog farms now present in the countryside have created widespread pollution.^{256, 257, 258}

At the same time, many small, traditional farmers are converting to modern farming methods that incorporate organic farming practices. It appears farmers are aware of threats to the environment from modern, conventional methods of farming, and they are beginning to adopt ecologically sound farming as an alternative. Organic farming regulations were in force in Poland in 2001, before the country's EU membership, but they were



© Leszek Kozlowski
Traditional farming

revised in 2004 after the nation joined the EU. The new Act on Organic Agriculture established a certification system and units to conduct farm inspections; it also established supervision over the new system. The Act manages farmer applications, authorizes the importing and inspection of organically farmed goods from other countries, and regulates plants and fertilizers.^{259, 260} The EU objectives in general are to “force a more competitive agricultural sector from the EU as a whole, and Member States individually...[and] remove inefficiency overall in the sector.”²⁶¹

Poland is continuing to benefit from EU support in developing organic farming, although the progress has been slow, and this particular sector is weaker than that of other EU

²⁵⁶ Organic Consumers Association. Rosenthal, Elisabeth. “Traditional Organic Farming in Poland Threatened by EU Laws.” Cited from International Herald Tribune. “In Poland, ‘Green’ Fields Besieged.” 3 April 2008. http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_11349.cfm

²⁵⁷ Sovereignty. The Independent. Howden, Daniel and Kamil Tchorek. “U.S. Pig Farmer Raises Almighty Stink With Invasion of Poland’s Countryside.” 18 November 2003. <http://www.sovereignty.org.uk/siteinfo/newsround/badfarm.html>

²⁵⁸ ICPPC. Rose, Julian. “Polish Peasants. V. Brussels Bureaucrats.” 2001. <http://www.icppc.pl/eng/index.php?id=102&s=polandandpeasant.htm>

²⁵⁹ Inderscience Publishers. *International Journal of Environment and Sustainable Development*. Kubala, Joanna and Malgorzata Grodzinska-Jurczak, Mariusz Cichon, Katarzyna Nieszporek. “Motivations for Organic Farming among Farmers from Malopolska Province, Poland.” 2008. <http://inderscience.metapress.com/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,6,6;journal,5,30;linkingpublicationresults,1:110852,1>

²⁶⁰ Agence BIO. Metera, Dorota. “Organic Agriculture in Poland.” 8 March 2007. <http://www.agencebio.fr/upload/pagesEdito/fichiers/dorotameteraenglishversion.pdf>

²⁶¹ Indiana University. Policy Brief. Behling, Alison and Matthew R. Auer. “The European Union’s Common Agricultural Policy and New Member States: The Example of Reform and the Economics of Organic Agriculture in Poland.” 2008.

http://www.indiana.edu/~west/documents/EUagriculturalpolicyPoland_000.pdf

member states.²⁶² Poland’s overall agricultural sector in general remains strong, although agriculture contributes a relatively small amount (4%) to the country’s gross domestic product (GDP).²⁶³ Two of the country’s main crops are wheat and corn, and Poland is also one of Europe’s leading producers of rye, potatoes, dairy products, and apples.^{264, 265}

Rural Transportation

Land

Driving can be dangerous in Poland. Although now showing some improvement,²⁶⁶ the country has had one of Europe’s highest driving accident rates. Many accidents are caused by driving after excessive drinking, and also by the poor quality of roads in the country. Roads may not be well-marked, adding to the occasional difficulty of finding one’s way.²⁶⁷



Exchange 51: Do you know this area very well?

Soldier:	Do you know this area very well?	chi pan zna dobzhe te okoleetse?
Local:	Yes.	tak

Many of the roads that exist today in Poland were built during the Communist era, and they were not designed to accommodate the present-day large volume of traffic. Being

²⁶² Indiana University. Policy Brief. Behling, Alison and Matthew R. Auer. “The European Union’s Common Agricultural Policy and New Member States: The Example of Reform and the Economics of Organic Agriculture in Poland.” 2008.

http://www.indiana.edu/~west/documents/EUagriculturalpolicyPoland_000.pdf

²⁶³ This percentage is effective as of 2007. Bureau of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Background Note: Poland. “Agriculture.” January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

²⁶⁴ Indiana University. Policy Brief. Behling, Alison and Matthew R. Auer. “The European Union’s Common Agricultural Policy and New Member States: The Example of Reform and the Economics of Organic Agriculture in Poland.” 2008.

http://www.indiana.edu/~west/documents/EUagriculturalpolicyPoland_000.pdf

²⁶⁵ This percentage is effective as of 2007. Bureau of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Background Note: Poland. “Agriculture.” January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

²⁶⁶ “Injuries in the European Union: Summary 2002-2004.” No date.

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/environment/IPP/documents/InjuriesEU_sum_en.pdf

²⁶⁷ Suite101.com. Read, Chris. “Driving Safely in Rural Poland: How to Get from A to B Accident Free While Motoring in Poland.” 22 June 2008. http://poland-travel.suite101.com/article.cfm/driving_safely_in_rural_poland

old and well-used, Polish roads also suffer from lack of maintenance. Repairs that have been made have often deteriorated. Usage by heavy trucks has created uneven spots on the roads, including roads that are close to large cities. Also, after winter ends, deep potholes appear in the roads, and drivers must take care to avoid them. Drivers may have to quickly apply their brakes or swerve to avoid dangerously damaged areas in the roads.^{268, 269}

Rural roads especially are often unpaved or in otherwise very poor condition. They are typically very narrow, often with a ditch at the edge, and have sharp turns. Pedestrians often walk along these roads, since they lack other areas to walk, and this creates a hazard for drivers. In addition, rural roads are shared by animals crossing the roads and people riding bicycles, often their only means of transportation. Visibility and maneuverability may be impaired by people using their bicycles to carry large loads such as wood to heat their homes. Heavy trucks also use the roads for industrial purposes. Large logging trucks, for instance, often negotiate narrow roads in rural areas where logging companies are located.²⁷⁰

Although many fuel stations are present along main roads, the quality of fuel sold at small service stations in rural areas may vary. Because of this, drivers are advised to buy gas only from large, well-known fuel companies. They are also advised to carry an additional 10 liters of fuel in a container in their car when they travel outside of large cities. Such precautions can help them avoid a situation in which they don't have an adequate gas supply for their car.²⁷¹



© Marcin Bajer
Gas station

Exchange 52: Is there lodging nearby?

Soldier:	Is there lodging nearby?	chi yest too gdzyesh yakeesh hotel?
Local:	Yes.	tak

²⁶⁸ New Poland. "Public Transportation: Cars." c. 2000.

http://www.newpoland.com/travel_public_transportation.htm

²⁶⁹ Suite101.com. Read, Chris. "Driving Safely in Rural Poland: How to Get from A to B Accident Free While Motoring in Poland." 22 June 2008. http://poland-travel.suite101.com/article.cfm/driving_safely_in_rural_poland

²⁷⁰ Suite101.com. Read, Chris. "Driving Safely in Rural Poland: How to Get from A to B Accident Free While Motoring in Poland." 22 June 2008. http://poland-travel.suite101.com/article.cfm/driving_safely_in_rural_poland

²⁷¹ New Poland. "Public Transportation: Fuel." c. 2000.

http://www.newpoland.com/travel_public_transportation.htm

Trains provide a convenient way to travel between cities and villages or small towns. Local train service is slower than express service but may be better for rural travel since it stops at the largest number of towns. It is also cheaper than other forms of travel.²⁷²

Waterways

Inland waterways are used to ship freight in Poland, although traffic is minimal. Rivers and canals are the most frequent means of this kind of transport, carrying less than 1% of the nation’s freight. Some rivers, such as the Oder, are regionally important. A canal links the industrial region of Upper Silesia to the Oder River, providing a route for transporting coal from Silesia to the seaport of Szczecin, on the Baltic Sea.²⁷³

Rural Health

During the years when the Soviet Union dominated Poland, the government funded and operated a centralized health system. This system included social security but lacked a specific budget for healthcare, instead directing funding to the overall social program. Health services were inconsistent throughout the country, and especially in rural areas, where they were of low quality. Specific problems found throughout Poland during this period included a shortage of doctors, nurses, health facilities, and preventive medicine. In response to ongoing deteriorating conditions at the end of the Communist era, the government made policy changes in health systems and began formal health care reform in 1999.^{274, 275}



Exchange 53: Is there a medical clinic nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a medical clinic nearby?	chi yest gdzyesh bleesko yakash pshiHodnya?
Local:	Yes, over there.	tak, tam, nyedaleko

²⁷² New Poland. “Public Transportation: Trains.” c. 2000.

http://www.newpoland.com/travel_public_transportation.htm

²⁷³ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. “Economy – Transportation and Telecommunications - Waterways.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28256>

²⁷⁴ Harvard.edu. Bossert, Thomas, Ph.D., and Cesary Wlodarczyk. “Unpredictable Politics: Policy Process of Health Reform in Poland [p. 7].” 2000. <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/ihsg/publications/pdf/No-74.PDF>

²⁷⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. Poland: A Country Study. “The Health Care System.” Curtis, Glenn E., Ed. 1992. <http://countrystudies.us/poland/44.htm>

Poland’s modern healthcare system is mixed between private and public entities and funding. The Ministry of Health makes and regulates policy, and the National Health Fund administers the delivery system and purchases health services funded by the public. Contributions for health insurance are mandatory and are paid primarily through taxes and out-of-pocket fees. In rural areas, people receive health care mostly from “independent institutions” (such as research institutes or branches of university clinics) that have contracted with the National Health Fund. In the cities, by contrast, most people receive health services from private medical practices.²⁷⁶

The functions of the Ministry of Health have been evolving since 1989, and the National Health Fund (NHF) began financing health services for insured people in 2003. Since then, NHF’s Law on Universal Health Insurance has been amended to provide more transparency for people on waiting lists for hospitalization, and it now clarifies the scope of health services that are available to homeless people. Aside from this, few other changes were made. The law defines and applies equal requirements and registration terms to both public and non-public service providers. It also defines Independent Health Care Institutions (HCIs), which are similar to public institutions but have different legal foundations.²⁷⁷



Travelers passing through Poland can receive free emergency care if they are from EU countries or other nations with whom Poland has international agreements. To receive treatment, EU nationals must show their European Health Insurance Card.

Exchange 54: My arm is broken, can you help me?

Soldier:	My arm is broken, can you help me?	Hiba zwamawem renken, chi mozhe mee pan pomoots?
Local:	Yes, I can help you.	tak, zobachimi tso shen da zrobeeck

Those in need of medications can go to pharmacies to get their prescriptions filled. For over-the-counter medications, it is necessary only to go to drug stores or grocery stores,

²⁷⁶ European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. Kuszewski, Krzysztof, and Christian Gericke. “Health Systems in Transition: Poland [pp. xv, xviii].” 2005. <http://www.euro.who.int/Document/E88670.pdf>

²⁷⁷ European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. Kuszewski, Krzysztof and Christian Gericke. “Health Systems in Transition: Poland [p. 11–12].” 2005. <http://www.euro.who.int/Document/E88670.pdf>

where plentiful supplies of medications manufactured both in Poland and internationally are available.²⁷⁸

Education

A well-delineated system of public education exists in Poland, and classes within the core curriculum are free of charge to students, both urban and rural. Schooling is mandatory between the ages of 7 and 18. Beyond that, students have a range of possibilities for vocational or technical training and for college through the doctoral level.^{279, 280}



© Baranka / flickr.com
Rural classroom

The university system in Poland expanded its base to include private schools in 1990, according to a new law on higher education that was passed in that year. The law not only established non-public higher learning institutions; it also granted more autonomy to all schools, expanding freedom in the areas of research, teaching, and self-governance.²⁸¹ Many academic programs have continued to be available at public schools, which are funded by the government. Higher education at state schools is not only free to Polish citizens, but also to many foreign students. As long as they have a residency permit to live in Poland or an EU passport, they do not have to pay tuition.²⁸²

Polish society is thoroughly permeated with a strong tradition of education, and this extends throughout the country. As early as the 12th century, education was an emphasized goal that Polish rulers adopted for the country. Polish peasants at that time benefited from new agricultural methods they learned from monks who were brought to Poland from France. Also, founded in 1364, Kraków University was famous for its “intellectual tolerance,” and in the 1700s, Poland became “a refuge for academic figures persecuted elsewhere in Europe for unorthodox ideas. The dissident schools founded by these refugees became centers of avant-garde thought, especially in the natural sciences.”²⁸³ These strong traditions have endured through modern times.

²⁷⁸ ColonialVoyage.com. “Poland: Health.” c. 2005–08.

<http://www.colonialvoyage.com/paes/eng/poland/info.html>

²⁷⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. “Government and Society – Education.” 2009.

<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28266>

²⁸⁰ EuroEducation.net. “Poland.” 2006. <http://www.euroeducation.net/prof/polaco.htm>

²⁸¹ Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London. “Education System in Poland: Tertiary Education.” c. 2005. <http://www.london.polemb.net/index.php?document=57>

²⁸² Australians – Study in Europe. “Funding and Fees – Poland.” c. 2008.

<http://www.asie.unimelb.edu.au/poland/feesfundingpoland.html>

²⁸³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. A Country Study: Poland. Curtis, Glenn E. Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment. “Education: The Education Tradition.” October 1992. Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

Village Life

Approximately 40% of the people in Poland live in rural areas.²⁸⁴ Many are involved in farming as their main income or side income. Around 1.6 million of Poland’s farmers live on small farms, usually 5 ha (12.36 a) maximum size.²⁸⁵ However, these people typically hold other jobs. Farms of this size—with many frequently occupying a large geographical area—are quite inefficient and non-mechanized. In order to make ends meet, farmers have had to diversify, sometimes renting rooms to guests who may stay in the main house or in an area designated for that purpose. On these small farms, agricultural products are primarily for consumption of the farmers, rather than to sell on the market.²⁸⁶ To a large extent, mass culture propagated by urban areas and the media have overcome rural parts of the country, undermining the traditional folk culture.²⁸⁷



Exchange 55: Does your mayor live here?

Soldier:	Does your mayor live here?	chi vash boormeestsh too myeshka?
Local:	Yes.	tak

On farms, women are responsible not only for the household work, but they also participate fully, laboring in the barns and the fields. Men are typically in charge of the household in Polish society, and this is especially true in rural areas. However, a woman may often be the main operator of the farm and do most if not all of the work, especially if her husband has died, or is sick and not capable of farming. Sometimes a woman owns property and thus is in charge of all decisions.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ CIA World Factbook. “Poland: People.” 28 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/PL.html>

²⁸⁵ Bureau of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Poland – Agriculture.” January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

²⁸⁶ PolandPoland.com. “Farming in Poland.” c. 2004. http://polandpoland.com/farming_poland.html

²⁸⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. “Cultural Life – Daily Life and Social Customs.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-256687>

²⁸⁸ Everyculture.com. Culture of Poland. “Food and Economy: Division of Labor.” c. 2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Poland.html>

Exchange 56: Respected mayor, we need your help

Soldier:	Respected mayor, we need your help.	panie boormeestshoo, potshebooyemi panyskyey pomotsi
Local:	Yes.	tak

Much of the rural housing pattern has changed in Poland since the mid 1900s, when settlements differed, depending on the region. In central and eastern Poland, people who settled the land were pastoralists and cultivators who cleared forest areas and created small, irregularly shaped villages. In Lower Silesia in the southern part of the country, Teutonic people created large, orderly settlements. The settlement style was different in the north as well, where large estates owned by Prussians prevailed. Typically, houses in the eastern, southern, and central areas were built of wood. Since the 1950s, villages close to tourist areas or large cities have grown in size. Many of the older wooden houses have been torn down and replaced with houses made of cinder-block.²⁸⁹



© Effervescing Elephant / flickr.com
Tradition houses

Checkpoints

On all of Poland’s borders, crossing points are available. These are borders with Germany, Ukraine, Belarus, Russian Federation, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Lithuania.



© orangebrompton / flickr.com
Germany/Poland border crossing

Exchange 57: Where is the nearest checkpoint?

Soldier:	Where is the nearest checkpoint?	gdzye yest naybleeshshi poonkt kontrolni?
Local:	It’s two kilometers.	yakeesh dva keelometri

²⁸⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica. Poland. “People – Settlement Patterns – Rural Settlement.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-28234>

Each checkpoint may have different document requirements for crossing.²⁹⁰ Many are open 24 hours a day, and, of course, some are much easier to cross than others.²⁹¹

Exchange 58: Is this all the ID you have?

Soldier:	Is this all the ID you have?	chi to yedini dokoooment toshsamoshchee, yakee pan ma?
Local:	Yes.	tak

On 21 December 2007, Poland became a member of the Schengen agreement, which meant that passports were no longer necessary at its Slovak, German, and Czech border crossings. Prior to that, traffic lines tended to be long at these crossings because guards could take up to an hour to check passports and other required documents.²⁹²

Land Mines

Poland has been signatory to the Mine Ban Treaty since 4 December 1997 and has stated its plans to ratify the Mine Ban Treaty “in the near future.”^{293, 294} Since 2006, however, the nation has backed away from those plans. Instead, the Ministry of National Defense decided that the earliest date Poland should ratify is 2015, by which time the country should have “alternatives to anti-personnel mines.”²⁹⁵

The government reported in January 2007 that it has plans in place to deactivate some anti-personnel mines by adding self-neutralization or self-destruct mechanisms to them. Further, it has declared the intention of destroying mines presently in stock over a 10-year



²⁹⁰ Polska. Poland’s Official Travel Website. “Border Crossing for Motorists.” c. 2009. http://www.poland.travel/en-gb/Artykuly/jak_podrozowac-en-gb/podroz_samochodem/przejscia_graniczne_samochodowe/pot_category_view

²⁹¹ NewPoland. “Public Transportation: Cars.” c. 2000.

http://www.newpoland.com/travel_public_transportation.htm

²⁹² Holiday-Lets-Poland. “Polish Border Crossing at Zgorzelec (Gorlitz), Poland.” No date.

<http://www.holiday-lets-poland.co.uk/Polish-border-crossing-Zgorzelec.htm>

²⁹³ Landmine Monitor. “Landmine Monitor Report 2007: Toward a Mine-Free World. Key Developments (Since May 2006): Poland.” 2007. <http://lm.icbl.org/lm/2007/print/LM07%20Key%20Developments.doc>

²⁹⁴ Landmine Monitor. “Poland.” c. 1998–2009.

<http://lm.icbl.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm/2008/countries/poland.html>

²⁹⁵ Landmine Monitor. “Poland.” c. 1998–2009.

<http://lm.icbl.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm/2008/countries/poland.html>

period.²⁹⁶ More specifically, between 2008 and 2012, the country has plans to destroy 750,000 stockpiled mines. In another development, a Polish diplomat announced in June 2008 that Poland plans to keep approximately 5,000 mines and use them as part of military training exercises.²⁹⁷

As of 2007, Poland’s stockpile included approximately 985,000 anti-personnel mines. In its letter to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) in January 2007, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that Poland does not “produce, export, or use anti-personnel mines in military operations” and is “seeking ways to address the humanitarian problems resulting from the irresponsible use of these weapons.”²⁹⁸ In past years, the nation imported one type of anti-personnel mine and manufactured three other kinds. Until 1993, it exported land mines.

Exchange 59: Is this area mined?

Soldier:	Is this area mined?	chi ten teren yest zameenovani?
Local:	No.	nye

Some areas of the Polish countryside are randomly contaminated by a large number of mines left from World War II and also by other explosive remnants of the war. The government claims that most such explosives (including land mines) are no longer functional because of deterioration from age and weather. Also, it reports that there are no particular areas that are specifically designated as mined danger zones.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Landmine Monitor. “Landmine Monitor Report 2007: Toward a Mine-Free World. Key Developments (Since May 2006): Poland.” 2007. <http://lm.icbl.org/lm/2007/print/LM07%20Key%20Developments.doc>

²⁹⁷ Landmine Monitor. “Poland.” c. 1998–2009. <http://lm.icbl.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm/2008/countries/poland.html>

²⁹⁸ Landmine Monitor. “Poland.” c. 1998–2009. <http://lm.icbl.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm/2008/countries/poland.html>

²⁹⁹ Landmine Monitor. “Poland.” c. 1998–2009. <http://lm.icbl.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm/2008/countries/poland.html>

Family Life

Introduction

Family life has remained more traditional in Poland than in other European countries. In the late 20th century, European nations experienced economic and political pressures that created changes in family structure. In particular, non-institutionalized family forms have increased in many European Union (EU) countries. Such changes include falling marriage rates along with increasing rates of divorce, unmarried cohabitation, and single-parent households. Poland, however, has remained one of the more stable and conservative European countries with regard to traditional family structure.³⁰⁰



© Lou Gold
The Sobczynscy family

Exchange 60: Does your family live here?

Soldier:	Does your family live here?	chi pana rodzyeena myeshka f tim domoo?
Local:	Yes.	tak

Family Structure³⁰¹

During the 45 years of Communist rule in Poland, the political establishment consisted of a hierarchical bureaucracy controlled by the state. Representatives of social groups and institutions had to connect to the bureaucracy through networks in order to mediate their groups' interests and try to meet their material needs. Such networks applied not only to political or professional organizations, youth groups, and community associations, but also to individuals and families. They found that connections outside the official hierarchy were essential if they wanted to live above subsistence level. Scarcities of goods through the official supply chain were not uncommon, and when they did occur,



© Jason Prini
Gathering of family and friends

³⁰⁰ Google Books. Hantrais, Linda. *Family Policy Matters* [p. 63]. 2004. Bristol, UK: The Policy Press. http://books.google.com/books?id=6gaVTKZ8cpIC&pg=PA63&lpg=PA63&dq=family+structure+in+Poland&source=bl&ots=syM6CgPfb8&sig=sKi3D7391PRsesiS3kzWza7lsZ8&hl=en&ei=IIQySrSFGYKQMv2q3IIK&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1

³⁰¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. A Country Study: Poland. Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment. “The Social Order – Social Relationships.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

individuals or family members reached out to extended families or networks of friends for assistance.

Exchange 61: Are these people part of your family?

Soldier:	Are these people part of your family?	chi chee loodzye to pana rodzyeena?
Local:	No.	nye

Often the exchanges of trade or service were directed between rural and urban areas, increasing during events such as the economic downturn of the 1980s. During this time, “the family, the traditional center of Polish social life, assumed a vital role in this informal system. In this respect, everyday urban life assumed some characteristics of traditional rural life. For both professional and working classes, extended families and circles of friends helped when a family or individual was not self-sufficient.”³⁰²



Exchange 62: Are you the only person who has a job?

Soldier:	Are you the only person in your family who has a job?	chi f pana rodzyeenye tilko pan pratsooye?
Local:	No.	nye

This independent networking system contrasted with the rigid and inefficient communist bureaucracy, perceived by Poles as an “untrustworthy privileged elite.”³⁰³ The system outlived communism in Poland and endured through the late 20th century. During this period, independent networking reinforced both strong family and group ties as well as the power of the Catholic Church, which had always remained relatively independent of the government.

³⁰² Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Poland*. Curtis, Glenn E. Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment. “The Social Order – Social Relationships.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

³⁰³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Poland*. Curtis, Glenn E. Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment. “The Social Order – Social Relationships.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

Post-Communist Family Structure

The transition to a market economy tied to conditions such as high unemployment and increasing social instability had the effect of strengthening family traditions in Poland. At the same time, because of economic problems, families began to shrink in size. (This trend toward smaller families was countered, however, by the Catholic Church’s ongoing prohibition of birth control.) Another new development in post-Communist Poland was influenced by Western democratic models of parenting and fatherhood that were filtering into Polish society. According to these liberal views, marital roles were more egalitarian than in the past, and active daily parenting was a function of both mothers and fathers. (Previously, mothers had taken the primary role of caregiver to the children in the family.) To some extent, Polish society began adopting more liberal models of the family, and they merged with the nation’s traditional family characteristics.³⁰⁴



Exchange 63: How many people live in this house?

Soldier:	How many people live in this house?	eele osoop myeshka f tim domoo?
Local:	Ten.	dzyeshench

Although the nuclear family has become smaller in Poland, the extended family remains important. In many cases, this group includes people who are not related to the family through marriage or blood. People who are called “uncle” or “auntie” may actually be close friends who have attained the status of family members.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ Google Books. *Parent-Youth Relations: Cultural and Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. Wejnert, Barbara and Almagul Djumabaeva. “From Patriarchy to Egalitarianism: Parenting Roles in Democratizing Poland and Kyrgyzstan [pp. 511–14, 518–20].” Gary W. Peterson, Suzanne K. Steinmetz, and Stephan M. Wilson, Eds. 2005. Haworth Press.

http://books.google.com/books?id=uTF4vsqzNUMC&pg=PA511&lpg=PA511&dq=post-communist+family+structure+in+Poland&source=bl&ots=oC9Vf303yI&sig=0MfanIu51DKYAzQcrVrLs0L8j-0&hl=en&ei=_9M2StXINYjSsQOUz-G2Bw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3

³⁰⁵ Global Volunteers. “Poland – Host Community Information. c. 2007.

http://www.globalvolunteers.org/poland/poland_people3.asp

Status of Women, Children, and Elderly

Women

Women in Polish society have traditionally lived within an authoritarian, male-led family structure. This changed during the 19th and 20th centuries, when Poland was partitioned and thousands of men were killed in World War I and World War II. During this time, women were left in charge of their families, supporting them economically and assuming authority for passing on cultural traditions.



© brocha / flickr.com
Mother with child

Exchange 64: Do your children go to school?

Soldier:	Do your children go to school?	chi pana dzyechee Hodzon do shkowi?
Local:	Yes.	tak

The notion that women are fundamentally associated with family welfare prevailed through the Communist era. It was briefly interrupted by a short-lived glorification of women as laborers during that period, until their labor outside the home was no longer needed (by the late 1950s). After the 1950s, a modified version of women's role in society dominated, in which women were responsible as both family caregiver and partial wage-earner. They continued to be seen as the primary active parent in the family, who maintains a close emotional bond with her children, compared to the more distant, authoritarian role of the father. Women still maintain this dual role of family caregiver and wage-earner in Polish society, and fathers in recent years have followed a trend of becoming more involved in the role of family caregiver.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ Google Books. *Parent-Youth Relations: Cultural and Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. Wejnert, Barbara and Almagul Djumabaeva. "From Patriarchy to Egalitarianism: Parenting Roles in Democratizing Poland and Kyrgyzstan [pp. 514–20]." Gary W. Peterson, Suzanne K. Steinmetz, and Stephan M. Wilson, Eds. 2005. Haworth Press.
http://books.google.com/books?id=uTF4vsqzNUMC&pg=PA511&lpg=PA511&dq=post-communist+family+structure+in+Poland&source=bl&ots=oC9Vf303yI&sig=0MfanIu51DKYAzQcrVrLs0L8j-0&hl=en&ei=_9M2StXINYjSsQOUz-G2Bw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3

Exchange 65: Is this your entire family?

Soldier:	Is this your entire family?	chi to pana tsawa rodzyeena?
Local:	Yes.	tak

Women also began to receive more chances to gain higher education during the Communist era, when schooling became an option for them. Similar to trends in other Eastern European nations of the Communist bloc, Poland's educational statistics for women entering college increased, and "Between 1975 and 1983, the total number of women with a higher education doubled, to 681,000 graduates. Many professions, such as architecture, engineering, and university teaching, employed a considerably higher percentage of women in Poland than in the West, and over 60% of medical students in 1980 were women."³⁰⁷



@urbanlegend / flickr.com
Female university students

While they were gaining in education, women were not able to obtain entry into high-level jobs where they could exert authority over political or economic issues. Likewise, they were excluded from holding positions within the Catholic Church, which continued to wield considerable power over all aspects of political and social life in Poland.³⁰⁸

Exchange 66: Are these your children?

Soldier:	Are these your children?	chi to pana dzyechee?
Local:	Yes.	tak

All factors have combined in the modern era to emphasize a dual role for Polish women that includes higher education balanced with marriage and a family. In their jobs, they

³⁰⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. A Country Study: Poland. Curtis, Glenn E. Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment. "The Social Order – The Role of Women." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

³⁰⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. A Country Study: Poland. Curtis, Glenn E. Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment. "The Social Order – The Role of Women." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

have traditionally received wages lower than those of men, leaving them economically dependent on a husband or partner.^{309, 310}

Children and the Elderly

According to longstanding tradition, Polish children learn at an early age to help with household work, cooperate with their peers, and be supportive of the family. Children, teens, and young adults are taught to respect authority in the family and in their social interactions. In general, the family cares for all its members, of all ages, providing material and social support. As both parents may be working outside the home, grandparents often help with the work of raising children.³¹¹



© Ian Kershaw
Children and pigeons

Exchange 67: Did you grow up here?

Soldier:	Did you grow up here?	chi pan stond poHodzee?
Local:	Yes.	tak

Children attend school for a mandatory period of time, and they are encouraged to pursue higher education. Daughters as well as sons receive educational opportunities that will help them attain an independent life. At the same time, daughters tend to be channeled into jobs that will enable them to provide secondary economic support to their families.^{312, 313}

³⁰⁹ OMCT. “Press Release – Poland: OMCT Expresses Its Concern About Violence Against Women in Poland at the 29th Session of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.” 13 November 2002.
<http://www.omct.org/index.php?id=EQL&lang=eng&articleSet=Press&articleId=2592>

³¹⁰ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Poland*. Curtis, Glenn E. Chapter 2 – The Society and Its Environment. “The Social Order – The Role of Women.” Curtis, Glenn E., Ed. October 1992. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>

³¹¹ Easterneuropeans.co.uk. “Poland, Family, and Catholic Culture.” c. 2007–09.
<http://www.easterneuropeans.co.uk/?page=56&article=43>

³¹² Jrank.org. “Poland: Gender Roles and the Family; Spouses as Coproviders.” c. 2009.
<http://family.jrank.org/pages/1286/Poland-Gender-Roles-Family-Spouses-Coproviders.html>

³¹³ Jrank.org. “Poland – Legislation Applied to Marriage, the Family, and Working Mothers.” c. 2009.
<http://family.jrank.org/pages/1282/Poland-Legislation-Applied-Marriage-Family-Working-Mothers.html>

Exchange 68: Is there a school nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a school nearby?	chi yest too f pobleezhoo shkowa?
Local:	Yes.	tak

In rural areas, many elderly people live alone on farms and operate them independently, their children having moved to the cities. Among those who were independent holders of farms in Poland in 2007, 23% were 55 years of age or older.³¹⁴ Women often become sole operators of family farms after their husbands die or can no longer manage to do the hard work that farming requires.³¹⁵



© Christopher Walker
Elderly Polish man

Exchange 69: Where do you work, sir?

Soldier:	Where do you work, sir?	gdzye pan pratsooye?
Local:	I am a farmer, sir.	yestem rolnyeekyem

Elderly people are entitled to receive retirement benefits. This legal protection was emphasized in the Polish constitution adopted in 1997. The amount they receive, however, is considered insufficient to live on, although some free social services (such as medical care) are also available.³¹⁶



© hampshiregirl / flickr.com
Young newlywed couple

Marriage, Divorce, and Birth

Marriage

People in Poland traditionally marry while they are relatively young (approximately 20). Also in keeping with tradition, they have children

³¹⁴ Eurostat Statistics in Focus. “Farm Structure in Poland – 2007.” 2008. http://www.eds-destatis.de/de/downloads/sif/sf_08_050.pdf

³¹⁵ Everyculture.com. Culture of Poland. “Gender Roles and Statuses.” c. 2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Poland.html>

³¹⁶ Jrank.org. “Poland – Legislation Applied to Marriage, the Family, and Working Mothers.” c. 2009. <http://family.jrank.org/pages/1282/Poland-Legislation-Applied-Marriage-Family-Working-Mothers.html>

and stay married to the same spouse for a lifetime.³¹⁷ Marriage is usually viewed through the lens of the Catholic Church, which is very conservative in this regard, opposing both divorce and birth control.

Exchange 70: Are you married?

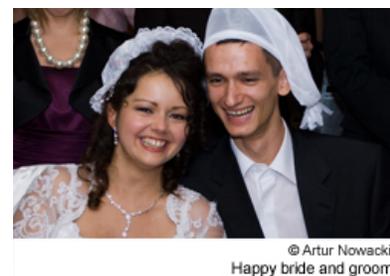
Soldier:	Are you married?	chi pan yest zhonati?
Local:	Yes.	tak

Increasingly, however, a trend against traditional marriage is being seen in Poland. In some cases, Polish couples are choosing to live together without marriage. Others marry and decide against having children. Even though Poland has maintained strong traditions concerning marriage and the family, to a large extent solidified by the Catholic Church, social restrictions are weakening in these areas.³¹⁸

Exchange 71: Is this your wife?

Soldier:	Is this your wife?	chi to pana zhona?
Local:	Yes.	tak

Poland’s constitution, adopted in 1997 by the post-communist government, establishes protections for pregnant women, marriage and the family, and other social institutions. However, family services were limited in the transition from communism to a free-market economy, and families have not always been able to depend on existing laws. Those concerning domestic violence directed against married women, for instance, have been difficult to interpret or are often unenforced, according to a report made to a UN committee studying the problem.^{319, 320, 321, 322}



³¹⁷ Everyculture.com. Culture of Poland. “Marriage, Family, and Kinship.” c. 2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Poland.html>

³¹⁸ Polskie Radio. Thenews.pl. “Poles Want Children But Not Marriage.” 2009. http://www.polskieradio.pl/thenews/news/artykul106735_poles_want_children_but_not_marriage.html

³¹⁹ Jrank.org. “Poland – Legislation Applied to Marriage, the Family, and Working Mothers.” c. 2009. <http://family.jrank.org/pages/1282/Poland-Legislation-Applied-Marriage-Family-Working-Mothers.html>

Religious marriage takes place most often in the Catholic Church since it is Poland's majority religion. Marriage, however, can also be a civil union. If marriage partners want their Church-conducted marriage recognized under Polish law, they need to file a required legal document in advance of the ceremony.³²³

Divorce

In order to divorce under Polish law, both parties have to prove not only irreconcilable differences but also that there is no chance that reconciliation can occur in the future.³²⁴ The breakdown of the marriage must be both complete and irretrievable, with both conditions applying.³²⁵ Further, a couple cannot divorce if “it is contrary to the interests of the couple's children, or if it is requested solely by the party primarily responsible for the disintegration” of the marriage.³²⁶ A marriage can also be annulled (canceled) under Polish law, as long as certain conditions apply at the time of marriage. Such conditions include being underage, legally incapacitated or mentally ill, entering into the marriage without conscious will, and other reasons that were present at the time of marriage.³²⁷



Although the Catholic Church strongly discourages divorce, national surveys taken between 1992 and 2005 reveal that the majority of Polish people believe divorce should be less difficult to obtain than it is.³²⁸ One factor that has increased stress in Polish marriages, leading to a higher divorce rate, is migration out of the country after Poland joined the EU. From a rate of 43,000 divorces per year in 2000, the number of divorces in

³²⁰ United Nations Development Fund for Women. “A Crusader for Women’s Protection Under Law in Poland.” November 2000.

http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/voices_from_the_field/story.php?StoryID=395

³²¹ OMCT. “Press Release – Poland: OMCT Expresses Its

Concern About Violence Against Women in Poland at the 29th Session of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.” 13 November 2002.

<http://www.omct.org/index.php?id=EQL&lang=eng&articleSet=Press&articleId=2592>

³²² Oneworld.net. “Concern Over Violence Against Women in Poland.” 2003.

<http://us.oneworld.net/places/poland/-/article/concern-over-violence-against-women-poland>

³²³ Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York. “Getting Married in Poland.” No dates.

<http://www.polishconsulateny.org/index.php?p=21>

³²⁴ Law Office of Piotr Staczek, Advocate. “Divorce and Separation in Poland.” c. 2003–06.

<http://separacja.pl/en/separation.html>

³²⁵ European Judicial Network in Civil and Commercial Matters. “Divorce – Poland. What Are the Grounds for Divorce?” 2007. http://ec.europa.eu/civiljustice/divorce/divorce_pol_en.htm#2.

³²⁶ National Catholic Reporter. Allen, John L., Jr. “Despite Reputation as Staunch Catholics, Poles Show Independence.” 31 May 2006. <http://ncronline.org/node/4110>

³²⁷ European Judicial Network in Civil and Commercial Matters. “Divorce – Poland. What Are the Conditions for Marriage Annulment?” 2007. http://ec.europa.eu/civiljustice/divorce/divorce_pol_en.htm#2.

³²⁸ National Catholic Reporter. Allen, John L., Jr. “Despite Reputation as Staunch Catholics, Poles Show Independence.” 31 May 2006. <http://ncronline.org/node/4110>

Poland soared to 80,000 per year in 2007.³²⁹ In 2004, Poland joined the EU, and approximately 1,000,000 Poles emigrated in search of better jobs, which led to long separation periods in their marriages. Furthermore, when they emigrate, Poles often come into contact with much more liberal cultures than they experienced in their own country. Depending on the country they emigrate to, women may experience greater independence outside of Poland. All of these reasons are seen as possibly contributing to the country's elevated rate of marital instability and divorce. In 2004, Poland's divorce law was modified to simplify the process of divorce and make it cheaper and less time-consuming.³³⁰

Childbirth

It is customary for newlyweds to look forward to the birth of a child, since life in Poland remains family-centered. In poor villages and households, children represent a source of assistance. They can help the family with farm work, housework, and caring for younger brothers and sisters. Children are also seen as part of a social security network that increases the odds that parents will be cared for in their old age.

Exchange 72: Do you have any brothers?

Soldier:	Do you have any brothers?	chi ma pan brachee?
Local:	Yes.	tak

After babies are born, a tradition often applies in which they sleep with the mother for a period of time. This usually ends at the child's christening, or baptism into the faith, which usually takes place between three and six weeks after birth. In parts of the country where old traditions are followed, family members will put gold coins in the diaper a baby wears during the christening ceremony. People believe this will bring the child good



© Joanna Kinowska
Polish boy looks after his younger brother

³²⁹ Telegraph.co.uk. Day, Matthew. "Migration to Britain 'Fuelling [sic] Poland's Divorce Rate.'" 13 February 2009. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/poland/4613634/Migration-to-Britain-fuelling-Polands-divorce-rate.html>

³³⁰ Telegraph.co.uk. Day, Matthew. "Migration to Britain 'Fuelling [sic] Poland's Divorce Rate.'" 13 February 2009. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/poland/4613634/Migration-to-Britain-fuelling-Polands-divorce-rate.html>

fortune.³³¹ After the christening ritual takes place, the babies begin a new routine in which they are placed in their own bed or cradle to sleep.³³²

Parents traditionally select a godparent for their child in Poland, and part of the godparent's role is simply being available to influence the child through childhood and beyond. Godparents are also expected to buy gifts for the children at certain rites of passage, such as the child's First Communion, which takes place around seven years of age.^{333, 334} Within the Catholic Church, the historical role of godparents in the early church included teaching the child about the Catholic faith in general. The godparent might also attest to his or her character in adulthood. According to church tenets, the godparent should be a member of the Catholic Church.³³⁵

Naming Conventions

Polish names are comprised of one or two given names and the family name (surname) at the end. Historically, the surnames derive from one of four sources: occupation (based on job), geographical origin, an ancestor's first name (usually taken from the father), or finally, description of an individual's character or physical appearance. For example, the surname "Kowalski" derives from the Polish word "kowl," meaning "blacksmith." Thus, this name "Kowalski" has its origins in an occupation. The surname "Wojciechowski" literally means "one from *Wojciechy*" (the common name of a village, which may also be spelled "*Wojciechow*" or "*Wojciechowo*"). This name, as can be seen, derives historically from geographical location.³³⁶



© meaduva / flickr.com
Polish name on a tombstone

Surnames that derive from an ancestor's first name (usually the father) may also derive from a female ancestor who is highly respected or wealthy. These ancestor-related names are often identified by their endings. Specifically, endings such as "-icz, -wicz, -owicz, -ewicz, and -ycz" typically mean "son of." The endings may vary by region; for instance,

³³¹ Google Books. Alicja Deck-Partyka. *Poland: A Unique Country & Its People*. "Christening Customs [p. 300]." 2006. Bloomington: AuthorHouse.

http://books.google.com/books?id=3C8JR8Gv3AkC&pg=PA300&lpg=PA300&dq=funeral+customs+in+Poland&source=bl&ots=IXdeYGLBPj&sig=vuLqQjNK2NxECU_dgyTvfgXW1Qk&hl=en&ei=gDzySb_5Hp2gtgOXyfXUCg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2

³³² Everyculture.com. Culture of Poland. "Socialization." c. 2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/NoSa/Poland.html>

³³³ Everyculture.com. Culture of Poland. "Socialization." c. 2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/NoSa/Poland.html>

³³⁴ Historical Boys' Clothing. "Polish Boys' Activities: Religion – Religious Groups, First Communion." 2007. <http://histclo.com/Country/pol/act/cpa-rel.html>

³³⁵ Catholic Education Resource Center. Saunders, Fr. William. "The Role of Godparents." 2003. <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/re0233.html>

³³⁶ About.com. Powell, Kimberly. "Polish Surname Meanings & Origins." c. 2009. http://genealogy.about.com/cs/surname/a/polish_surnames.htm

in eastern Poland, the meaning “son of” is indicated by the surname endings “-yc and -ic.”³³⁷

Often, the first name (given name) would indicate the child’s gender. In these cases, boys’ names would typically end with a consonant (as in “Marcin” or “Andrzej”). They could also end with a “-y” or “-i” (as in “Konstanty” or “Antoni”). Historically, girls’ names would end with the letter “-a” (as in “Ewa” or “Maria”). There were always some exceptions.³³⁸

Given names for a child at birth derived from a variety of sources. A child could be named after a national hero, a king, queen, or prince, or a literary character.³³⁹ A person may also be named after a Catholic saint, as a given name. Because Polish people have a long tradition of venerating saints and the feast days held in their honor, they adopted the idea of naming their child upon a priest’s recommendation. In making this decision, they consulted the Roman calendar in order to identify a saint whose feast day was within three weeks of the date of their child’s birth. Sometimes this date would replace the child’s actual birth date on official documents (such as immigration records), and future birthdays would be held on the date of the saint’s feast day that had been adopted.³⁴⁰

Upon marrying, some flexibility exists as to how the bride and groom may alter their family names (surnames). Either spouse can take the other spouse’s last name, or add it to the original name that he or she already has. Alternatively, both can choose to keep their existing last names.³⁴¹

Family Celebrations

Families get together to celebrate birthdays, marriages, and other special events. Their gatherings, which include extended family and friends, are accompanied by sharing of specially prepared foods for the occasion.

One of the most important family celebrations is “name day,” which is a special day to honor the patron saint whose name an individual has taken for his or her own given name. Derived from Catholic tradition, it is similar to a birthday in significance. Polish people celebrate their name day with a get-together in their homes or by going out to an event or restaurant in



© Alexander Baxevanis
A Polish family gathers to celebrate

³³⁷ About.com. Powell, Kimberly. “Polish Surname Meanings & Origins.” c. 2009.

http://genealogy.about.com/cs/surname/a/polish_surnames.htm

³³⁸ Poland.com. “Names.” c. 2002–06. <http://culture.poland.com/more-about-poles/names/>

³³⁹ Poland.com. “Names.” c. 2002–06. <http://culture.poland.com/more-about-poles/names/>

³⁴⁰ PolandGenWeb. “Naming Customs Found in Poland.” 3 June 2008.

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~polwgw/naming.html>

³⁴¹ Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York. “Getting Married in Poland.” No date.

<http://www.polishconsulateny.org/index.php?p=21>

the evening to dine and socialize.³⁴² Often, the person celebrating the name day receives presents from invited guests.

³⁴² Global Volunteers. "Poland – Host Community Information. c. 2007.
http://www.globalvolunteers.org/poland/poland_people7.asp