



# Polish

# Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1   Profile</b> . . . . .	<b>7</b>
Introduction . . . . .	7
Geography . . . . .	8
Geographic Divisions and Topographic Features . . . . .	8
<i>Baltic Coastal Plain</i> . . . . .	8
<i>Lakelands Belt</i> . . . . .	9
<i>Central Lowlands</i> . . . . .	9
<i>Southern Uplands</i> . . . . .	9
<i>Southern Mountains and Associated Features</i> . . . . .	9
Rivers . . . . .	10
Climate . . . . .	11
Major Cities . . . . .	11
<i>Warsaw</i> . . . . .	11
<i>Kraków</i> . . . . .	12
<i>Łódź</i> . . . . .	13
<i>Wrocław</i> . . . . .	13
<i>Gdańsk</i> . . . . .	14
History . . . . .	15
<i>Early and Middle History</i> . . . . .	15
<i>Decline and Partition</i> . . . . .	15
<i>War and Independence</i> . . . . .	16
<i>The Communist Era</i> . . . . .	16
<i>Post-Communist Poland</i> . . . . .	17
<i>Recent Events</i> . . . . .	17
Government . . . . .	18
Media . . . . .	19
Economy . . . . .	20
Ethnic Groups . . . . .	21
<i>Poles</i> . . . . .	21
<i>Silesians and Germans</i> . . . . .	22

<i>Ukrainians</i> . . . . .	22
<i>Jews</i> . . . . .	22
Chapter 1   Profile, Assessment . . . . .	24
Chapter 1   Profile, Assessment Answers . . . . .	25
<b>Chapter 2   Religion . . . . .</b>	<b>25</b>
Introduction . . . . .	25
Major Religions . . . . .	26
Religion and Government. . . . .	27
Religion in Daily Life . . . . .	28
Religious Events. . . . .	30
<i>Three Kings Day—January 6.</i> . . . . .	30
<i>Easter</i> . . . . .	30
<i>Pentecost Sunday.</i> . . . . .	31
<i>Corpus Christi.</i> . . . . .	31
<i>Assumption Day—August 15.</i> . . . . .	31
<i>All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day—November 1 and 2.</i> . . . . .	32
<i>St. Andrew's Day—November 30</i> . . . . .	32
<i>Christmas Day—December 25</i> . . . . .	32
<i>St. Stephen's Day—December 26.</i> . . . . .	33
Places of Worship . . . . .	33
<i>Kalwaria Zebrzydowska.</i> . . . . .	33
<i>Jasna Gora</i> . . . . .	33
<i>The Basilica of Our Lady of Licheń.</i> . . . . .	34
<i>Niepokalanów</i> . . . . .	34
<i>Wadowice</i> . . . . .	34
Behavior in Places of Worship . . . . .	35
Chapter 2   Religion, Assessment . . . . .	36
Chapter 2   Religion, Assessment Answers . . . . .	37
<b>Chapter 3   Traditions . . . . .</b>	<b>38</b>
Introduction . . . . .	38
Honors and Values. . . . .	39

Formulaic Codes of Politeness . . . . .	39
Hospitality and Gift Giving . . . . .	41
Eating Customs and Food . . . . .	41
Dress Code . . . . .	43
Non-Religious Celebrations . . . . .	44
<i>New Year's Day</i> . . . . .	44
<i>Labor Day—1 May</i> . . . . .	44
<i>Constitution Day—3 May</i> . . . . .	44
<i>Polish Army Day—15 August</i> . . . . .	44
<i>Independence Day—11 November</i> . . . . .	44
Dos and Don'ts . . . . .	45
<i>Do</i> . . . . .	45
<i>Don't</i> . . . . .	45
Chapter 3   Traditions, Assessment . . . . .	46
Chapter 3   Traditions, Assessment Answers . . . . .	47
<b>Chapter 4   Urban Life . . . . .</b>	<b>48</b>
Introduction . . . . .	48
Urban Challenges . . . . .	49
<i>Pollution</i> . . . . .	49
<i>Urban Development</i> . . . . .	50
<i>Urban Living Conditions</i> . . . . .	50
<i>Re-privatization in Warsaw</i> . . . . .	51
Healthcare . . . . .	51
Urban Education . . . . .	53
Restaurants . . . . .	54
Marketplaces and Street Vendors . . . . .	55
Urban Traffic and Transportation . . . . .	56
Street Crime . . . . .	58
Chapter 4   Urban Life, Assessment . . . . .	59
Chapter 4   Urban Life, Assessment Answers . . . . .	60

<b>Chapter 5   Rural Life</b> . . . . .	<b>61</b>
Introduction . . . . .	61
Land Tenure and Distribution. . . . .	62
Rural Economy. . . . .	63
Rural Transportation . . . . .	64
Rural Healthcare . . . . .	65
Who's in Charge? . . . . .	66
Border Crossings and Checkpoints. . . . .	67
Landmines . . . . .	68
Chapter 5   Rural Life, Assessment . . . . .	69
Chapter 5   Rural Life, Assessment Answers . . . . .	70
<b>Chapter 6   Family Life</b> . . . . .	<b>71</b>
Introduction . . . . .	71
Household and Family Structure . . . . .	72
<i>Children.</i> . . . .	72
<i>Adolescents</i> . . . . .	73
<i>Elders</i> . . . . .	74
Gender Issues . . . . .	74
<i>Employment and Education</i> . . . . .	74
<i>Domestic Violence</i> . . . . .	75
Married Life, Divorce and Birth . . . . .	76
<i>Married Life.</i> . . . .	76
<i>Divorce</i> . . . . .	76
<i>Birth</i> . . . . .	77
Family Social Events: Weddings, Birthdays, and Funerals. . . . .	77
<i>Weddings</i> . . . . .	77
<i>Birthdays.</i> . . . .	78
<i>Funerals</i> . . . . .	79
Naming Conventions . . . . .	80
<i>Given Names.</i> . . . .	80
<i>Surnames</i> . . . . .	80
<i>Nicknames</i> . . . . .	81

Chapter 6   Family Life, Assessment . . . . .	.82
Chapter 6   Family Life, Assessment Answers . . . . .	.83
<b>Further Readings and Resources. . . . .</b>	<b>.84</b>
Articles and Websites . . . . .	.84
<b>Final Assessment . . . . .</b>	<b>.86</b>
Final Assessment . . . . .	.86
Final Assessment Answers . . . . .	.89

# Chapter 1 | Profile



Tatra Mountains in southern Poland.  
Wikimedia / Aneta Pawska

## Introduction

The Republic of Poland is located in Central Europe on the southern shore of the Baltic Sea. Most of the country is covered by flat plains, with mountains rising on the southern border. Warsaw, the nation's capital and largest city, is located in east-central Poland.<sup>1</sup>

Poland's 40 million people are largely ethnically and culturally homogenous. The few ethnic minorities reside primarily in border provinces. The majority of the population claims Polish nationality, with Polish as a first language. Poles are bound by a common religion, Roman Catholicism, and the painful legacy of World War II.<sup>2, 3</sup>

After the communist regime fell in 1989, Poland began transitioning to a liberal democracy. By the end of the 20th century, although it still retained historic ties with Eastern Europe, Poland was firmly aligned with the West, joining NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004. Since 2015, nationalist conservatives have gained and consolidated power, and have attempted to enact changes that may undermine Poland's democratic foundation.<sup>4, 5</sup>

1 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

2 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

3 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>

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

5 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

## Geography

Poland is the ninth-largest country in Europe. Its territory covers 312,685 sq km (120,729 sq mi) of land and 8,430 sq km (3,255 sq mi) of water.<sup>6</sup> It is slightly smaller than New Mexico. The country lies at a crossroad that links northwestern Europe to the Eurasian plains and Eastern Europe. The Baltic Sea in the north provides access to the shipping lanes of the North Atlantic Ocean.<sup>7, 8</sup>

Poland shares land boundaries with Germany, Lithuania, Ukraine, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Belarus, and Russia. The border with the Czech Republic, which lies to the southwest of Poland, is its longest, stretching along 796 km (495 mi). The Poland-Lithuania border, which runs along the northeastern corner of the country, is the shortest (104 km/65 mi). In the west, Poland shares a 467 km (290 mi) border with Germany. Directly south of Poland lies Slovakia, with a border that runs 541 km (334 mi). In the east, Poland shares 535 km (332 mi) of border with Ukraine and 418 km (260 mi) with Belarus. The Russian enclave of Kaliningrad lies in the north, accounting for a 210 km (130 mi) border. The Baltic Sea coast runs for 440 km (273 mi).<sup>9</sup>

## Geographic Divisions and Topographic Features

Poland's geography is dominated by rolling plains and lowlands. With 91% of the territory lying less than 300 m (985 ft) above sea level, the average elevation is 173 m (568 ft) above sea level. In the south, the plains merge into uplands and hills, which in turn progress into a narrow strip of mountain ranges.<sup>10, 11</sup>

### *Baltic Coastal Plain*

This lowland plain forms a narrow belt of dunes and swamps that is 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). The coastline is punctuated by a few natural harbors, the Pomeranian Bay in the west, and the Gulf of Gdańsk in the east. The Gulf of Gdańsk is a large, semicircular indentation along the coast of the Baltic Sea. The gulf's western and southern sides are in Poland and its eastern side in Russia's Kaliningrad. The gulf is 64 km (40 mi) from north to south and 97 km (60 mi) from east to west. Its maximum depth is more than 113 m (371 ft). Two long, thin peninsulas protrude into the gulf, one from the northwest and the other from the south.<sup>12, 13, 14</sup> The southern peninsula, called the Vistula Spit, is a 55 km- (34 mi-) long and 2 km- (1.2 mi-) wide sandbank that connects Poland to Kaliningrad and encloses the Vistula coastal lagoon. The only entrance to the lagoon from the Baltic Sea is through Russian territorial waters. Despite objections from European Union and environmental groups, the Polish government plans to dig a canal through the spit that would allow Polish vessels to enter the lagoon without requesting access from Russia.<sup>15</sup>

6 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," The World Factbook, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>

7 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," Encyclopædia Britannica, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

8 Into Poland, "Geography of Poland," n.d., <http://www.intopoland.com/poland-info/geography-of-poland.html>

9 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," The World Factbook, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>

10 Into Poland, "Geography of Poland," n.d., <http://www.intopoland.com/poland-info/geography-of-poland.html>

11 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," Encyclopædia Britannica, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

12 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., Poland: A Country Study (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>

13 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," Encyclopædia Britannica, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

14 Encyclopædia Britannica, "Gulf of Gdańsk," 4 June 2008, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Gulf-of-Gdansk>

15 Industry Europe, "Poland Defies EU & Green Groups with Vistula Spit Canal Plans," 6 March 2019, <https://industryeurope.com/poland-defies-eu-green-groups-with-vistula-spit-canal-plans/>



## Lakelands Belt

South of the Baltic coastal plain lies the Lakelands Belt, composed of glacial drift and a mixture of sand, clay, gravel, and boulders. At its southern boundary, this terrain marks the southernmost extent of glacial activity from the most recent European ice age. The northeastern section of this 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). This region includes the Masurian Lakes Plateau, Poland's greatest concentration of lakes.<sup>16, 17, 18</sup>

## Central Lowlands

Farther south, the central lowlands were once crisscrossed by a myriad of streams and runoff from melting glaciers. Here, deposits of soil mixed with silt and clay to form the Polish heartland's rich agricultural region. Today, this area is home to some of the nation's largest cities.<sup>19, 20, 21</sup>

## Southern Uplands

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 south to the northern edge of the Carpathian Mountains. Also called the Little Poland Uplands (Wyzyna Małopolska), this area is drained by the Vistula River and its tributaries. The region's topography was formed 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.<sup>22, 23, 24</sup>

## Southern Mountains and Associated Features

Along Poland's southern border stretch the mountain ridges of Carpathians and Sudetes. The dominant mountains are the Carpathians, which run along the border with Slovakia. The Carpathians are considered Poland's most scenic region. The mountains are rich with deposits of natural gas and some petroleum, sulfur, and salt. The highest peaks are located in the Tatra Mountains (Tatry in Polish), which are part of the Carpathians and are known as the Polish Alps.<sup>25, 26</sup> Mt. Rysy is Poland's highest mountain, rising to an elevation of 2,499 m (8,199 ft). Rysy peak is a border crossing point between Poland and Slovakia, attracting large numbers of tourists and hikers.<sup>27, 28, 29</sup>

16 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

17 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Masurian Lakeland," 17 June 2011, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Masurian-Lakeland>

18 Poland for Visitors, Poland Travel Guide, "Great Masurian Lakes," n.d., [http://www.polandforvisitors.com/travel\\_poland/great\\_masurian\\_lakes](http://www.polandforvisitors.com/travel_poland/great_masurian_lakes)

19 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

20 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>

21 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>

22 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Little Poland Uplands," 4 May 2012, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Little-Poland-Uplands>

23 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

24 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>

25 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

26 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Tatra Mountains," 20 April 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tatra-Mountains>

27 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Małopolskie," 22 September 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Malopolskie>

28 Kenneth Kimutai too, "Highest Mountains in Poland." *World Atlas*, 25 April 2017, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/highest-mountains-in-poland.html>

29 Marek Kępa, "9 Most Glorious Polish Mountain Ranges," *Culture.pl*, 22 July 2019, <https://culture.pl/en/article/9-most-glorious-polish-mountain-ranges>

The Sudeten Mountains (Sudety in Polish) run for more than 250 km (155 mi) along the Polish-Czech border, forming the southern border of Lower Silesia. The westernmost part of the range stretches into Germany. The Polish portion of the mountains covers an area of about 9,300 sq km (3,590 sq mi), which equates to about 50% of the range. The highest peak in this range, Mount Śnieżka, is located just over the border in the Czech Republic and reaches 1,602 m (5,256 ft). Mineral water springs dot the valleys of the Sudetes. Quarries of quartz and granite are located in these mountains as well, along with a variety of rock crystals, garnets, agates, jaspers, opals, and gold nuggets found in the streams. Coking coal extracted from the region is processed at facilities in the city of Walbrzych. Tourists can visit old coal, metal ore, and uranium mines. The region also offers secluded spas and ski resorts.<sup>30, 31, 32</sup>

## Rivers

Most of Poland's territory drains northward into the Baltic Sea, approximately one third by way of the Oder (Odra) River and half by way of the Vistula (Wisła) River. The Vistula is Poland's longest river, at 1,090 km (675 mi). It begins in southern Poland in the Carpathians, meanders past Warsaw, and creates a delta as it empties into the Gulf of Gdańsk. Almost the entire river is navigable by small craft. The Oder, Poland's second-longest river, begins in the Czech Republic, forms part of Poland's border with Germany, and empties into the Baltic Sea. The total length of the Oder is 912 km (567 mi).<sup>33, 34, 35</sup>

The San River is a major tributary of the Vistula. Rising in the Carpathian Mountains on the border between Poland and Ukraine, the San follows the Polish-Ukrainian border for some 50 km (31 mi) and then meets the Vistula. The San's total length is close to 433 km (269 mi).<sup>36, 37</sup> Another of the Vistula's main tributaries is the Bug River. It rises east of L'viv in Ukraine, follows the Polish border north to Brest in Belarus, and then flows into Poland, joining the Vistula near Warsaw. The Bug's total length is approximately 860 km (530 mi).<sup>38, 39</sup>

The Vistula River also connects to the Noteć River by way of the Bydgoszcz Canal, located in central-western Poland.<sup>40, 41</sup> 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.<sup>42, 43</sup>

High water occurs in Poland's rivers twice each year. During the spring, water from melting snow floods the rivers in the lowland areas. During summer, heavy rainfall again swells the rivers to their maximum height.<sup>44</sup>

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- 30 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," Encyclopædia Britannica, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 31 Danubia Enterprises, "The Home of Eastern European Spas," n.d., [http://www.eurotradezone.org/eastern\\_european\\_spas/polish\\_spas](http://www.eurotradezone.org/eastern_european_spas/polish_spas)
- 32 20 Years Polska, "Sudety Mountains," n.d., <https://www.poland.travel/en/experience/hiking/mountains/sudety-mountains>
- 33 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," Encyclopædia Britannica, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 34 Jerzy Pruchnicki and Władysław Parczewski, "Vistula River," Encyclopædia Britannica, 27 March 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Vistula-River>
- 35 Władysław Parczewski and Jerzy Pruchnicki, "Oder River," Encyclopædia Britannica, 9 July 2009, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Oder-River>
- 36 Jerzy Pruchnicki and Władysław Parczewski, "Vistula River," Encyclopædia Britannica, 27 March 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Vistula-River>
- 37 San Fishing, "The San," n.d., <http://www.sanfishing.com/the-san-river.html>
- 38 Encyclopædia Britannica, "Bug River," 3 November 2011, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bug-River>
- 39 Jerzy Pruchnicki and Władysław Parczewski, "Vistula River," Encyclopædia Britannica, 27 March 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Vistula-River>
- 40 Encyclopædia Britannica, "Bug River," 3 November 2011, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bug-River>
- 41 Jerzy Pruchnicki and Władysław Parczewski, "Vistula River," Encyclopædia Britannica, 27 March 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Vistula-River>
- 42 Waterbodies, "Notec River," n.d., <https://www.waterbodies.org/waterbody/notec-river>
- 43 Encyclopædia Britannica, "Warta River," 13 February 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Warta-River>
- 44 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," Encyclopædia Britannica, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

## Climate

Poland's weather is varied and unpredictable. The country's warmest areas are the center and the southwest, while the coldest spots are in the northeast, where the proximity to the Baltic Sea keeps summer temperatures low. In western Poland, the climate is influenced by moderate coastal weather patterns. Eastern Poland's climate is more severe, subject to humid continental conditions, where frigid polar air from Russia or Scandinavia mixes with subtropical air masses from the south. Much of the time, the weather throughout the country is wet or cloudy.<sup>45, 46, 47</sup>

Officially, there are four seasons in Poland, but traditionally people include two additional seasons, pre-spring (*przedwiosnie*) and pre-winter (*przedzimie*), with their own specific weather patterns. Winter, beset with snow, lasts between one and three months, with temperatures falling below zero. Winter is followed by one or two months of pre-spring, in which both spring and winter weather conditions alternate. The next season is spring, often sunny, followed by a rainy and warm summer. A warm and sunny autumn is followed by pre-winter, which is humid and foggy and signals the advent of winter.<sup>48, 49, 50</sup>

Poland's average 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. The hottest month is July. Temperature can exceed 28°C (82°F) for a few days between May and September. Average annual precipitation is 400–750 mm (15.7–29 in), with most of the rain falling in summer.<sup>51, 52, 53</sup>

## Major Cities

### Warsaw

Warsaw, the capital of Poland, is also its largest city and the industrial and cultural center of Poland. Because of its historical and cultural evolution, Warsaw holds an eminent place among European cities. Small settlements existed where Warsaw now stands as early as the 11th century. The present city started developing by the mid-14th century near the Castle Tower. Warsaw became the capital of Poland in 1596, and at different times it was conquered by the Swedes, Prussians, and Russians. In 1915, Warsaw fell to the Germans, who also occupied the city during World War II.<sup>54, 55, 56</sup>

In 1940 the occupying Nazis forced Warsaw's nearly 394,000 Jews, one-third of the city's population, into a ghetto that covered 2.4% of the city's area. The ghetto's population eventually reached more than half a million people.

45 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

46 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>

47 20 Years Polska, "Poland Weather—Everything You Need to Know about Polish Climate," n.d., <https://www.poland.travel/en/plan-your-trip/about-poland/poland-weather-%E2%80%93-everything-you-need-to-know-about-polish-climate>

48 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>

49 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

50 Climates to Travel, World Travel Guide, "Climate—Poland," n.d., <https://www.climatestotravel.com/climate/poland>

51 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>

52 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

53 Climates to Travel, World Travel Guide, "Climate—Poland," n.d., <https://www.climatestotravel.com/climate/poland>

54 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>

55 Norman Davies et al., "Warsaw," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 30 August 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Warsaw>

56 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

In 1943, the ghetto was liquidated after a Jewish uprising that claimed the lives of 60,000 Jews and destroyed more than 85% of the historic center of the city. Today, most of Poland's Jewish population lives in Warsaw.<sup>57, 58, 59</sup>

The historic Old Town, with its churches, palaces, and markets, was reconstructed after the war and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980.<sup>60</sup> The Old Town's Royal Way (Trakt Królewski) is home to the residence of the Polish president, the reconstructed Royal Castle, and a statue of the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus. Other famous Poles associated with Warsaw include Frédéric Chopin, the classical composer and a pianist, and the physicist Marie Curie. The city is home to many educational and research institutions, libraries, art galleries, and museums.<sup>61, 62, 63</sup>

## Kraków

Kraków is Poland's second-largest city, with a population of over 771,000. The city stretches across the Vistula River in southern Poland.<sup>64, 65</sup> Kraków was founded in the seventh century. In 1320 it became the home of the Polish kings, who were crowned and buried there until the 1700s. The city became part of Austria in 1795, when Poland was partitioned for the third time; it reverted to Poland in 1919.<sup>66, 67</sup>

During the Nazi occupation, Kraków became the capital of Nazi-occupied Poland. In April 1940, the Nazis ordered the city's 60,000 Jews, one-fourth of the population, to evacuate the city within four months. About 35,000 left; the rest were deported, killed, or forced into a ghetto. Only 2,000 Jews survived the war. Today, approximately 1,000 Jews live in Kraków.<sup>68</sup>

Unlike Warsaw, most of Kraków's streets and architecture remained intact by the end of World War II. The historic center, with its 13th-century market square and numerous historical houses, palaces, churches, and synagogues, was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978.<sup>69, 70, 71</sup>

Today Kraków is a renowned cultural center and tourist destination. Among the city's many centuries-old landmarks are the 16th-century royal Wawel Castle and the 14th century Gothic cathedral. The city's famed Jagiellonian University was founded in 1364 and counts the astronomer Copernicus among its alumni.<sup>72, 73</sup>

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- 57 Jewish Virtual Library, "Warsaw, Poland," n.d., <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/warsaw-poland>
- 58 Culture.pl, "7 Polish Cities Where Jewish Culture Lives On," 12 March 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/7-polish-cities-where-jewish-culture-lives-on>
- 59 Jewish Virtual Library, "Poland Virtual Jewish History Tour," n.d., <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/poland-virtual-jewish-history-tour>
- 60 UNESCO, "Historic Centre of Warsaw," n.d., <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/30/>
- 61 Norman Davies et al., "Warsaw," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 30 August 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Warsaw>
- 62 City of Warsaw, "Warsaw by the Numbers," 31 October 2009, <https://www.um.warszawa.pl/en/articles/warsaw-numbers>
- 63 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 64 City Population, "Poland: Major Cities," 31 May 2019, <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/poland/cities/>
- 65 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Kraków," 1 November 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Krakow>
- 66 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Kraków," 1 November 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Krakow>
- 67 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 68 Jewish Virtual Library, "Virtual Jewish World: Kraków, Poland," n.d., <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/krak-oacute-w-poland-jewish-history-tour>
- 69 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Kraków," 1 November 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Krakow>
- 70 Wojciech Oleksiak, "How Kraków Made It Unscathed through WWII," Culture.pl, 22 May 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/how-krakow-made-it-unscathed-through-wwii>
- 71 UNESCO, "Historic Centre of Kraków," n.d., <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/29/>
- 72 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Kraków," 1 November 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Krakow>
- 73 Jagiellonian University in Kraków, "History of the Jagiellonian University," n.d., [https://en.uj.edu.pl/en\\_GB/about-university/history](https://en.uj.edu.pl/en_GB/about-university/history)

Kraków is Poland's technological and manufacturing center. The Kraków Special Economic Zone is a major IT hub that hosts 250 startups with 14,700 jobs.<sup>74, 75, 76</sup> The nearby communist-era town of Nowa Huta is home to the massive ArcelorMittal Steelworks complex, formerly Lenin Steelworks. As one of the largest iron-and-steel manufacturers in Eastern Europe, this plant attracts tourists interested in the history of communist Poland.<sup>77, 78</sup>

## Łódź

Łódź, located on the drainage basin of the Vistula and Oder rivers in central Poland, is the country's third-largest city, with a population of just over 685,000.<sup>79</sup> The city began as a small village in 1423. It developed as a center of the weaving and textile industry and became known as the "Manchester of Poland." Today, the 19th century factory buildings that survived the two world wars are home to shops, movie theaters, museums, art galleries, and restaurants.<sup>80, 81</sup>

After the start of World War II in 1939, the occupying Nazis began deporting the city's 233,000 Jews to other cities. Of those who stayed behind, approximately 45,000 died in the Łódź ghetto of starvation and disease. The Germans renamed the city Litzmannstadt, after General Karl Litzmann, who conquered Łódź in World War I. The city survived the Nazi occupation with little damage.<sup>82, 83, 84</sup>

Łódź is the center of Poland's film industry and the birthplace of notable artists such as the Jewish pianist Artur Schnabel and the Jewish novelist Jerzy Kosinski. In 2017 Łódź was inducted into the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and named UNESCO City of Film.<sup>85, 86, 87</sup>

## Wrocław

Wrocław lies at the foot of the Sudetes Mountains along the Oder River in the Silesia region of southwestern Poland. The city, called the Polish Venice, is built on 12 islands connected by 120 bridges and crisscrossed by the Oder's numerous channels and tributaries. With a population of just over 640,000, it is Poland's fourth-largest city. Wrocław is a regional industrial center, housing textile mills, heavy machinery, metalworking plants, and an electronics industry. It is also an important communications center, with river transportation and international railway links.<sup>88, 89, 90</sup>

74 IATI, "Kraków Technology Park," n.d., <http://iati.pl/en/partner/krakow-technology-park/>

75 Krakow Info, "Krakow Technology Park," n.d., <http://www.krakow-info.com/zone.htm>

76 Polish Investment and Trade Agency, "Kraków—Technology Park," n.d., [https://www.paih.gov.pl/investment\\_support/sez/krakow](https://www.paih.gov.pl/investment_support/sez/krakow)

77 Poland In, "Main Kraków Steelworks Furnace to Close—2000 Jobs Go," 12 November 2019, <https://polandin.com/45298530/main-krakow-steelworks-furnace-to-close-2000-jobs-go>

78 Julia Szyndzielorz, "Kraków's Lenin Steelworks: A Rare View of a Socialist Realist Gem," *Guardian*, 17 December 2017, 17 December 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2017/dec/17/krakow-poland-nowa-huta-lenin-steel-mill-public-tour>

79 City Population, "Poland: Major Cities," 31 May 2019, <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/poland/cities/>

80 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Łódź," 31 March 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Lodz>

81 20 Years Polska, "Łódź," n.d., <https://www.poland.travel/en/cities/lodz>

82 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Łódź," 31 March 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Lodz>

83 Holocaust Encyclopedia, "Lodz," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d., <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/lodz>

84 Jewish Virtual Library, "Virtual Jewish World: Lodz, Poland," n.d., <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/lodz-poland-jewish-history-tour>

85 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Łódź," 31 March 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Lodz>

86 Marek Kępa, "Łódź: A City Built on Peaceful Co-Existence," *Culture.pl*, 20 March 2017, <https://culture.pl/en/article/lodz-a-city-built-on-peaceful-co-existence>

87 20 Years Polska, "Łódź," n.d., <https://www.poland.travel/en/cities/lodz>

88 City Population, "Poland: Major Cities," 31 May 2019, <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/poland/cities/>

89 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Wrocław," 22 November 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Wroclaw>

90 Isabelle de Pommereau, "Polish City of Wrocław Comes to Terms with Its German Past," *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 October 2012, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2012/1019/Polish-city-of-Wroclaw-comes-to-terms-with-its-German-past>

Wrocław originated in the 10th century as a center for the amber trade. In the 13th century, many Germans moved to the city at the invitation of local authorities. The city eventually became part of Germany and adopted the name Breslau. The city's industrial and residential sections were heavily damaged during World War II. After the war, Wrocław was returned to Poland and many Germans fled west to Germany or were expelled.<sup>91, 92</sup>

Wrocław is now a scientific and cultural center, with Gothic-Renaissance buildings, theaters, an opera, a concert hall, clubs, museums, parks, and a botanical garden. The city hosts one of Poland's most important musical events, known as the Jazz on the Oder Festival. In 2006 the city was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.<sup>93, 94</sup>

## Gdańsk

Gdańsk is situated on the Baltic Sea at the mouth of the Vistula River in north-central Poland. The city has a population of over 466,000 and functions as the business and cultural capital of the Pomorze region. It was founded at the end of the 10th century and during the Renaissance was the wealthiest port on the Baltic Sea.<sup>95, 96, 97</sup>

For hundreds of years, Gdańsk moved back and forth between German and Polish rule. Under Germany, the city was called Danzig. After World War I, it reverted to Poland. In 1939, Poland's refusal to surrender the city to Hitler prompted a German attack and the start of World War II. By the end of the war Gdańsk had been badly damaged by Allied and Soviet bombardments. Restoration work in the 1950s brought in Dutch and French architectural influences. In 1980, labor unrest in the Gdańsk shipyards grew into a country-wide struggle for freedom that culminated in the collapse of communism in 1989.<sup>98, 99</sup>

The Port of Gdańsk is the largest in Poland and connects Scandinavia to the rest of Europe. The port includes a deep-water container terminal that accommodates the largest vessels that sail the Baltic Sea. The city's symbol is the 15th century port crane; the largest such crane in Europe, called the Żuraw.<sup>100, 101</sup>

Gdańsk is a cultural and educational center, with important institutions including medical schools, a maritime museum, theaters, and an opera house. The city is home to the Gothic Church of the Holy Mary, the largest brick church in Europe.<sup>102</sup>

91 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Wrocław," 22 November 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Wroclaw>

92 Krzysztof Popiński, "Wrocław's History," VisitWroclaw.eu, n.d., <https://visitwroclaw.eu/en/wroclaws-history>

93 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Wrocław," 22 November 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Wroclaw>

94 Krzysztof Popiński, "Wrocław's History," VisitWroclaw.eu, n.d., <https://visitwroclaw.eu/en/wroclaws-history>

95 City of Gdańsk Website, "History of the City Gdańsk," n.d., <https://www.gdansk.pl/en/about-gdansk/history-of-the-city-gdansk.a.3012>

96 City Population, "Poland: Major Cities," 31 May 2019, <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/poland/cities/>

97 20 Years Polska, "Gdańsk, Sopot, Gdynia—The Tri-city," n.d., <https://www.poland.travel/en/cities/gdansk-and-the-tricity/gdansk-sopot-gdynia>

98 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Gdańsk," 11 April 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Gdansk>

99 City of Gdańsk Website, "History of the City Gdańsk," n.d., <https://www.gdansk.pl/en/about-gdansk/history-of-the-city-gdansk.a.3012>

100 All Port, "Gdansk Overview," n.d., <http://www.4allports.com/port-overview-gdansk-poland-pid109.html>

101 World Port Source, "Port of Gdansk," n.d., [http://www.worldportsource.com/ports/commerce/POL\\_Port\\_of\\_Gdansk\\_1176.php](http://www.worldportsource.com/ports/commerce/POL_Port_of_Gdansk_1176.php)

102 20 Years Polska, "Gdańsk—Top Attractions," n.d., <https://www.poland.travel/en/cities/gdansk-and-tricity/top-10-attractions-in-gdansk>

# History

## *Early and Middle History*

Poland's written history begins in 966 CE when its ruler Mieszko I proclaimed Christianity for his kingdom. The Polish state had to contend with internal strife stemming from a series of violent and chaotic royal successions. Externally, Polish kings aligned with the papacy to gain protection from the expansionist ambitions of the Holy Roman Empire, Poland's neighbor to the west. This era saw the beginnings of German colonization of Polish territory and the arrival of a large Jewish population fleeing from persecution in western Europe.<sup>103, 104</sup>

By the mid-16th century, the Polish state was the largest and arguably strongest in Europe. Most of its power was accrued during the Jagiellon dynasty, which began after Poland united with Lithuania in 1386 and lasted until 1572. During this period, the nobility and landowning gentry gained and solidified power, while the peasant class became weaker.<sup>105, 106</sup>

## *Decline and Partition*

Poland declined during the next two centuries as a result of wars with Russia, Sweden, and the Ottomans. The nobles who made up the legislature had to give unanimous approval for a proposed law to pass; the government was thus often paralyzed and foreign powers often bribed nobles to defeat unwanted measures. In 1764 the expanding Russian Empire 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.<sup>107, 108, 109</sup>

The first partition was followed by upheaval and resilience. An attempted constitutional reform promoted by the gentry was overruled by the nobility. The educational system was modernized and secularized. The significant loss of power and territory created a strengthened national identity that helped Poles weather foreign domination over the next one-and-a-half centuries.<sup>110, 111</sup>

The second partition of Polish territory concluded in 1793, leaving only a part of central Poland independent. In 1795, the last partition divided all of Poland's remaining territory among Russia, Austria, and Prussia. Russia retained the largest part, approximately half. Poland ceased to be a country for well over a century.<sup>112, 113</sup>

The Polish people lost not only their territory but also civil liberties and much of their cultural heritage, including artistic and literary treasures that were taken from the country. In the mid-19th century, the Russians curtailed the

103 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

104 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>

105 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

106 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>

107 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

108 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>

109 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Liberum Veto: Polish Government," 30 October 2008, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/liberum-veto>

110 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

111 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>

112 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

113 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>

use of the Polish language in schools in favor of Russian. In the Prussian section, policies designed to Germanize the population were implemented. Only in the Austrian section, where more liberal policies were introduced, did the Polish people have a somewhat independent political life.<sup>114, 115</sup>

## ***War and Independence***

When World War I broke out in 1914, Poles were drafted into the armies of both the Russian Empire and the opposing Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria). Germany and Austria recognized Poland's right to provisional independence in 1916 and after the Russian Empire disintegrated in 1917, Russia's new government-supported Polish self-determination. At the war's end 1918 Poland became an independent republic and regained much of its territory, including access to the Baltic Sea.<sup>116, 117</sup>

During the 1920s and 1930s, Poland was preoccupied with balancing itself politically between Germany, the Soviet Union, and the other European powers. As battle lines were being drawn in 1939, Poland refused to allow Soviet troops on its territory. When the Soviet Union and Germany signed a pact of nonaggression, it included secret provisions to partition Poland. At the same time, Poland concluded an alliance with England. In September 1939, after the Polish government refused to cede Gdańsk to Germany, Germany invaded Poland, thus igniting World War II. Poland was again partitioned as war raged across Europe.<sup>118, 119, 120</sup>

Although the Polish people organized an active underground resistance, the nation suffered tremendously over the next few years. Among the war's many atrocities was the 1940 Katyn Massacre, in which the Soviets killed 22,000 Polish officers and soldiers. Polish territory became the epicenter of the Holocaust, hosting six extermination camps, including Auschwitz-Birkenau and Treblinka, between 1941 and 1945. Approximately 6 million Poles died in the war, half of them Jews. German forces deported around 2.5 million to labor camps in Germany. By the end of the war, countless Polish cities, including Warsaw, lay in ruins.<sup>121, 122, 123, 124, 125</sup>

## ***The Communist Era***

Under Soviet influence, a communist government emerged in Poland, led by Bolesław Bierut, a Pole who was also a Soviet citizen. The 1952 constitution established Poland as a people's republic, its government and foreign policy based on the Soviet model. In 1968, Poland joined the forces of the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries to invade Czechoslovakia and suppress the revolt against Soviet rule.<sup>126, 127</sup>

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- 114 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 115 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>
- 116 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 117 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>
- 118 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 119 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>
- 120 BBC News, "Russia and Poland in Spat over World War Two Cause," 26 September 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34369487>
- 121 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 122 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>
- 123 Michael Berenbaum, "Extermination Camp," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 25 January 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/extermination-camp>
- 124 Jewish Virtual Library, "Concentration Camps Maps: Extermination Camps in German Occupied Poland," n.d., <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/map-of-extermination-camps-in-poland>
- 125 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Katyn Massacre," 28 April 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Katyn-Massacre>
- 126 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 127 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>



The growing burden of debt and inefficiency in central economic planning led to a recession accompanied by social and economic instability. Strikes, spiraling prices of goods, and food shortages continued through the 1970s.<sup>128, 129</sup>

Starting in 1980, Solidarity, an independent labor union, organized strikes in the Gdańsk shipyards under the leadership of an electrician named Lech Wałęsa. Solidarity's demands included higher wages, lower consumer prices, an end to censorship, and workers' right to strike. The strikes rapidly spread to other parts of the country. In 1981, the authorities imposed martial law, arrested Solidarity's leadership, and forced the movement underground. In 1989 popular pressure forced the government to restore Solidarity's legal status.<sup>130, 131, 132</sup>

By late 1989, communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe were collapsing. In Poland, negotiations between Solidarity and the communist government led to free parliamentary elections in which Solidarity-backed candidates prevailed. The country was renamed the Republic of Poland; the Communist Party dissolved in 1990. Lech Wałęsa, the Solidarity leader, became the country's first popularly elected president.<sup>133, 134</sup>

### **Post-Communist Poland**

Solidarity's popularity waned in the 1990s as the difficulties of economic transition from central planning to a free market were felt. However, reforms establishing a democratic political system and the rule of law continued. Poland joined NATO in 1999. In 2003 it contributed troops to and led a multinational force to stabilize Iraq. In 2004, Poland joined the European Union, continuing its transition to democracy and a market economy.<sup>135, 136</sup>

### **Recent Events**

As its European integration proceeded, Poland remained wary of Russian aggression. In 2008, Poland agreed to allow the United States to install an antimissile system on its territory, despite Russian objections. In 2010, Polish president Lech Kaczyński, his wife, and 94 government officials died in a plane crash in western Russia on their way to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyn Massacre. Polish anger and suspicion toward Russia ran high, despite the conclusion of investigators that the crash was caused by human error. Russia's 2014 invasion and annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula heightened Poles' perception of Russia as a threat. That same year, Poland requested additional NATO troops on its territory. In 2015, Poland purchased the antimissile system from the United States, completing the agreement initiated in 2008.<sup>137, 138, 139, 140, 141</sup>

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- 128 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 129 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>
- 130 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 131 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>
- 132 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Solidarity," 20 August 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Solidarity>
- 133 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 134 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Solidarity," 20 August 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Solidarity>
- 135 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 136 BBC News, "Poland Profile—Timeline," 28 May 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17754512>
- 137 Benjamin B. Fischer, "The Katyn Controversy: Stalin's Killing Field," Central Intelligence Agency, n.d., <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/winter99-00/art6.html>
- 138 Marcin Goettig and Pawel Sobczak, "Polish Leader's Jet Probably Exploded Just before 2010 Crash: Commission," Reuters, 10 April 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-smolensk-inquiry/polish-leaders-jet-probably-exploded-just-before-2010-crash-commission-idUSKBN17C20T>
- 139 Rebecca Flood, "Vladimir Putin Was Responsible for Plane Crash that Killed Polish President Lech Kaczynski, Says Polish Defence Minister," *Independent*, 15 December 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/vladimir-putin-polish-president-lech-kaczynski-plane-crash-russia-poland-defence-minister-antoni-a8111831.html>
- 140 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 141 BBC News, "Poland Profile—Timeline," 28 May 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17754512>

In 2014, center-right prime minister Donald Tusk resigned after being called to lead the European Council. The following year, the nationalist, conservative Law and Justice Party (PiS) won Poland's presidential elections and attained an unprecedented parliamentary majority. The PiS victory was fueled by popular sentiments that most Poles had not benefitted from the recent economic growth and prosperity overseen by politically moderate administrations.<sup>142, 143</sup>

PiS lawmakers introduced reforms aimed at bringing the nation's independent judiciary and media under government, and therefore PiS, control. President Andrzej Duda, himself a PiS member, vetoed some of the more stringent reform measures and sent some back to parliament for revision. The antidemocratic nature of the reforms brought on warnings and threats of sanctions from the European Union. PiS also introduced popular social policies like increased benefits for families with children and lower retirement ages. In the 2019 parliamentary elections, PiS narrowly won a second term, but it lost control of the upper house of the legislature and failed to increase its majority in the more powerful lower house.<sup>144, 145, 146, 147</sup>

Observers agree that ultimate political power in Poland rests with PiS head Jarosław Kaczyński, twin brother of deceased president Lech Kaczyński. Although he only holds the position of legislator, Kaczyński is seen as wielding significant control over PiS elected officials like the prime minister and lawmakers.<sup>148, 149, 150</sup> By 2020 an apparent ideological rift had emerged within PiS, with hardliners being led by Kaczyński and moderates rallying around President Duda, who was seeking to broaden his voter support ahead of presidential elections scheduled for later in the year.<sup>151</sup>

## Government

Poland has a presidential-parliamentary form of government, based on the 1997 constitution. The government is composed of executive, legislative, and judicial branches.<sup>152</sup>

In the executive branch, the president is popularly elected by an absolute majority (over 50% of the vote) and limited to two five-year terms in office. The president is the commander in chief of the armed forces, can declare martial law, and can veto laws proposed by the legislature—however, the legislature can override presidential vetoes with a three-fifths majority. While the president is the chief of state, the prime minister is the head of

142 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," Encyclopædia Britannica, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

143 BBC News, "Poland Profile—Timeline," 28 May 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17754512>

144 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," Encyclopædia Britannica, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

145 Jon Henley and Christian Davies, "Poland's Populist Law and Justice Party Win Second Term in Power," Guardian, 14 October 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/14/poland-populist-law-and-justice-party-increases-majority>

146 Monika Pronczuk, "Poland's Immigrant Stance at Odds with Need for Workers," Financial Times, 4 August 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/2dd225a8-a498-11e9-974c-ad1c6ab5efd1>

147 Pawel Bukowski and Filip Novokmet, "Within a Single Generation, Poland Has Gone from One of the Most Egalitarian Countries in Europe to One of the Most Unequal," London School of Economics and Political Science, 2 December 2019, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2019/12/02/within-a-single-generation-poland-has-gone-from-one-of-the-most-egalitarian-countries-in-europe-to-one-of-the-most-unequal/>

148 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," Encyclopædia Britannica, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

149 Economist, "Jaroslaw Kaczyński, Poland's Real Leader, Has Vanished," 14 June 2018, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2018/06/14/jaroslaw-kaczynski-polands-real-leader-has-vanished>

150 Marek Strzelecki and Rodney Jefferson, "The Plane Crash That Helped One Man Take Over a Nation," Bloomberg News, 7 October 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2019-10-08/poland-election-jaroslaw-kaczynski-s-rise-to-power-after-tragedy>

151 Olivia Kortas, "Poland's TVP Public Television Rift Reveals PiS Party Split," Deutsche Welle, 11 March 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/polands-tvp-public-television-rift-reveals-pis-party-split/a-52728399>

152 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," The World Factbook, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>

government. The president appoints the prime minister and cabinet for confirmation by the legislature. The president does not have the power to dismiss the government.<sup>153, 154</sup>

Poland's legislature consists of a 100-seat upper house called the Senate and a 460-seat lower house called the Sejm. Members of both houses are popularly elected to four-year terms, but while senators are elected individually, members of the Sejm are elected based on party lists. The Sejm holds an array of powers and responsibilities, like nominating some judges, national bank presidents, and other high officials. The Senate can reject or amend laws passed by the Sejm, but the Sejm can override the Senate with a simple majority vote.<sup>155, 156</sup>

There are two high courts in the judicial branch. The Supreme Court (Sad Najwyzszy) consists of its president and 120 justices organized into divisions such as criminal, civil, and labor law. The other high court is the Constitutional Tribunal, which consists of 15 justices. Judges are nominated by either the Sejm or the 25-member National Judicial Council and appointed by Poland's president. Judges usually serve until retirement at age 65.<sup>157, 158</sup>

## Media

Poland's constitution forbids censorship and guarantees freedom of expression. However, Poland also has anti-insult laws, including against blasphemy and insulting the president. The nation's media is considered highly diverse yet politically and ideologically polarized. Polish media consumers are increasingly gravitating toward ideology-based content that reinforces already-held viewpoints.<sup>159, 160, 161</sup>

Poland has several state-owned TV channels and radio stations, in addition to a variety of private and regional channels and stations. Television is Poland's leading medium and the country has the largest broadcasting market in the eastern half of Europe. Hundreds of newspapers are in print, with strong local and regional representation. Foreign companies, often from Germany, control about three-fourths of the media market. Some 78% of the population uses the internet; Facebook is the most widely used social network.<sup>162, 163, 164</sup>

Since PiS came to power in 2015, control of the media has become an integral part of the party's stated effort to remake Poland along conservative, nationalist lines. A 2015 law gave government ministers the power to appoint the leadership of state-owned broadcasters. The party-appointed leaders in turn fired hundreds of journalists and stifled dissenting political viewpoints. State-owned outlets often broadcast content deemed hateful, xenophobic, or anti-Semitic. The rage stoked by such content has been linked to the January 2019 murder of Gdańsk mayor

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- 153 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 154 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 155 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 156 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 157 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 158 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 159 BBC News, "Poland Profile—Media," 21 January 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17753721>
- 160 Jo Harper, "Soros Boosts Anti-PiS Media ahead of Crucial Polish Polls," *Deutsche Welle*, 26 February 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/soros-boosts-anti-pis-media-ahead-of-crucial-polish-polls/a-47686631>
- 161 Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2020—Poland," 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/poland/freedom-world/2020>
- 162 BBC News, "Poland Profile—Media," 21 January 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17753721>
- 163 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 164 Jo Harper, "Soros Boosts Anti-PiS Media ahead of Crucial Polish Polls," *Deutsche Welle*, 26 February 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/soros-boosts-anti-pis-media-ahead-of-crucial-polish-polls/a-47686631>

Pawel Adamowicz, a popular moderate opposition figure. In the runup to the October 2019 general elections, state television programs boosted PiS while warning against voting for opposition parties.<sup>165, 166, 167, 168, 169</sup> Private media critical of the government have been criticized and have seen a decline in advertising revenue from government-controlled companies.<sup>170, 171, 172</sup> By 2020 government manipulation of the state media encountered a backlash, as over half of Poles believed that the national TV broadcaster was not fulfilling its mandate to provide balanced reporting.<sup>173</sup>

## Economy

Poland is the European Union's sixth-largest economy. Its remarkable economic growth since the late 1990s has earned it the nickname "European Tiger." During the economic crisis of 2008–09, Poland was the only EU country that managed to avoid recession. In 2017, per-capita gross domestic product (GDP) was USD 29,600, a global ranking of 69. The GDP growth rate for 2019 was 4.3%.<sup>174, 175, 176</sup>

The services sector dominates the economy, with a 57.4% share of GDP, followed by industry at 40.2% and agriculture at 2.4%. The primary industries are machine building, iron and steel, coal mining, chemicals, shipbuilding, food processing, glass, beverages, and textiles. The primary agricultural products are potatoes, fruits, vegetables, wheat, poultry, eggs, pork, and dairy. The services sector employs nearly 60% of the workforce.<sup>177</sup>

In December 2019, Poland had a positive trade balance of approximately USD 252 million. Poland's top three export partners are Germany, the Czech Republic, and the United Kingdom; its top three import partners are Germany, China, and Russia. The top exports are machinery and transport equipment, intermediate manufactured goods, miscellaneous manufactured goods, and food and live animals. The top imports are machinery and transport equipment, intermediate manufactured goods, chemicals, minerals, fuels, lubricants, and related materials.<sup>178, 179</sup>

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- 165 Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2020—Poland," 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/poland/freedom-world/2020>
- 166 Piotr Buras, "The Killing of Gdańsk's Mayor Is the Tragic Result of Hate Speech," *Guardian*, 17 January 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/17/gdansk-mayor-pawel-adamowicz-killing-poland>
- 167 Reporters without Borders, "Poland," n.d., <https://rsf.org/en/poland>
- 168 Marc Santora and Joanna Berendt, "Poland's State Media Is Government's Biggest Booster before Election," *New York Times*, 11 October 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/11/world/europe/poland-election-state-television-tvp.html>
- 169 BBC News, "Poland Profile—Timeline," 28 May 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17754512>
- 170 Reporters without Borders, "Poland," n.d., <https://rsf.org/en/poland>
- 171 BBC News, "Poland Profile—Media," 21 January 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17753721>
- 172 Makana Eyre and Martin Goillandeau, "Poland's Government Is Systematically Silencing Opposition Voices," *Foreign Policy*, 31 May 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/31/polands-government-is-systematically-silencing-opposition-voices-gazeta-wyborcza-adam-michnik-pis-kaczynski-kurski-tvp/>
- 173 Olivia Kortas, "Poland's TVP Public Television Rift Reveals PiS Party Split," *Deutsche Welle*, 11 March 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/polands-tvp-public-television-rift-reveals-pis-party-split/a-52728399>
- 174 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 175 Enrique Aldaz-Carroll et al., "Why Are Poles Unimpressed with Poland's Economic Achievements?" *Brookings*, 18 December 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2018/12/18/why-are-oles-unimpressed-with-polands-economic-achievements/>
- 176 Reuters, "World Bank Raises Poland's 2019 GDP Growth Forecast to 4.3%," 8 October 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-growth-worldbank/world-bank-raises-polands-2019-gdp-growth-forecast-to-4-3-idUSKBN1W00E9>
- 177 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 178 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 179 Trading Economics, "Poland Balance of Trade," March 2020, <https://tradingeconomics.com/poland/balance-of-trade>

The World Bank projects that Poland's economy will slow down to 3.6% in 2020 and 3.3% in 2021 due to downturns in Turkey and Russia.<sup>180</sup> EU development funds, of which Poland receives the largest share in the bloc, are a major contributor to ongoing economic development. Potential challenges to future economic stability include restrictions on foreign investment, poor transportation infrastructure, a stifling bureaucracy and tax system, and declining population size due to emigration and low fertility rates.<sup>181</sup>

## Ethnic Groups

### *Poles*

The Polish people's national identity is shaped by their tumultuous history, from the country's storied origins in the 10th century to its partition into nonexistence in 1795 to its invasion and occupation from both west and east during World War II. Thus, the Polish national identity has become strongly associated with language, religion, and origin.<sup>182, 183, 184</sup> Today, 97% of people in Poland identify as Polish.<sup>185</sup>

Poland's ethnic homogeneity contrasts sharply with the demographics prior to World War II, when over one-third of the nation's people belonged to non-Polish ethnic groups. During the war, the population was greatly affected, not only by the devastating fighting but also by migration and shifting borders. After the war, the communist authorities suppressed non-Polish ethnic identities and expelled members of ethnic minorities like Germans and Ukrainians. Many ethnic groups that existed before the war came to identify more as Polish, leading to the emergence of a highly homogenous Polish state.<sup>186, 187, 188, 189</sup> In 2015, slogans like "Poland for Poles" and "Poland First" were part of the nationalist PiS's successful electoral campaign.<sup>190</sup>

Polish is the national language and the native language of almost the entire population of Poland. The Polish language belongs to the West Slavic branch of Slavic languages. The language's most prominent dialect is Great Polish, spoken in the northwest of the country. Before World War II, various dialects and other languages were widely spoken in various parts of the country. After 1945, through mass migration and education efforts, Polish became widespread and homogenized throughout the country.<sup>191, 192, 193</sup>

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- 180 World Bank, "Polish Growth Likely to Slow Amid Economic Downturn in Europe," 9 October 2019, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/10/09/polish-growth-likely-to-slow-amid-economic-downturn-in-europe>
- 181 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," The World Factbook, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 182 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," Encyclopædia Britannica, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 183 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., Poland: A Country Study (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>
- 184 Annika Morath, "'Poland for the Polish'? Taking a Closer Look at the Polish Rejection of Refugees," Heinrich Boll Stiftung, 14 June 2017, <https://eu.boell.org/en/2017/06/14/poland-polish-taking-closer-look-polish-rejection-refugees>
- 185 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," The World Factbook, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 186 PolandPoland.com, "Ethnic Minorities in Poland," 2004, [http://polandpoland.com/minorities\\_poland.html](http://polandpoland.com/minorities_poland.html)
- 187 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," Encyclopædia Britannica, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 188 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., Poland: A Country Study (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>
- 189 Annika Morath, "'Poland for the Polish'? Taking a Closer Look at the Polish Rejection of Refugees," Heinrich Boll Stiftung, 14 June 2017, <https://eu.boell.org/en/2017/06/14/poland-polish-taking-closer-look-polish-rejection-refugees>
- 190 Marc Santora, "Poland Bashes Immigrants, but Quietly Takes Christian Ones," New York Times, 26 March 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/26/world/europe/immigration-poland-ukraine-christian.html>
- 191 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," Encyclopædia Britannica, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 192 Marta Moskal, "Language Minorities in Poland at the Moment of Accession to the EU," Revista de Sociolingüística, 2004, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.616.3581&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- 193 Ethnologue, "Polish: A Language of Poland," n.d., [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=pol](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=pol)

## Silesians and Germans

Some 1.1% of Poland's population identifies as Silesian and 0.2% as German.<sup>194</sup> The region of Silesia and Opole in southwestern Poland has traditionally been home to a German minority. Frequent changes in sovereignty and competing German and Polish cultural influences have led to the development of a unique Silesian culture. The language spoken in the region is heavily influenced by both Polish and German.<sup>195, 196, 197, 198</sup>

After the fall of communism, Silesian cultural groups began promoting German language and culture in schools and local government and established special ties with Germany. Whether people in the region identify as Silesian or German can often depend on political considerations. Some German ethnic organizations consider Silesians as ethnic Germans. The Polish government has been reluctant to recognize the Silesian ethnicity and has categorized the Silesian language as a dialect of Polish.<sup>199, 200, 201, 202</sup>

## Ukrainians

Approximately 0.1% of people in Poland identify as Ukrainians.<sup>203</sup> Southeastern Poland has been a traditional homeland for Ukrainians, but after World War II the Ukrainian population was scattered throughout the country. Today, Ukrainians live mostly in the southwestern and northern parts of Poland. Two-thirds of Ukrainians in Poland belong to the Greek Catholic Church, and one-third to the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church, which is part of the Greek Orthodox Church. Orthodox Ukrainians make up the vast majority of Poland's Orthodox Christian population.<sup>204, 205, 206</sup> Since 2015, approximately two million Ukrainians from Ukraine have settled in Poland, taking advantage of the Polish government's welcoming migration policies toward Christian Europeans.<sup>207</sup>

## Jews

Historical records point to the presence of Jews in Poland as early as 977 CE.<sup>208</sup> Despite a history of antipathy and discrimination that included ghettos and massacres (pogroms), Jews thrived and made significant contributions to Poland's culture. In 1939 more than three million Jews lived in Poland—the largest Jewish community in Europe. By 1945, only an estimated 200,000 had survived the Holocaust. Communist-led antisemitic campaigns in 1968–71 forced many Jews to leave the country, and by 1991 only approximately 10,000 remained.<sup>209, 210, 211, 212</sup>

- 194 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 195 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 196 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>
- 197 Encyclopædia Britannica, "Silesia," 21 October 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Silesia>
- 198 Countries and Their Cultures, "Poland," n.d., <https://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Poland.html>
- 199 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 200 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>
- 201 Encyclopædia Britannica, "Silesia," 21 October 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Silesia>
- 202 Countries and Their Cultures, "Poland," n.d., <https://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Poland.html>
- 203 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 204 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 205 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>
- 206 Countries and Their Cultures, "Poland," n.d., <https://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Poland.html>
- 207 Makana Eyre and Martin Goillandeau, "Poland's Two-faced Immigration Strategy," *Politico*, 6 June 2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-two-faced-immigration-strategy-ukraine-migrants/>
- 208 Countries and Their Cultures, "Poland," n.d., <https://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Poland.html>
- 209 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 210 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>
- 211 Simon Gansinger, "Communists against Jews: The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland in 1968," *Fathom*, 2016, <https://fathomjournal.org/communists-against-jews-the-anti-zionist-campaign-in-poland-in-1968/>
- 212 Deutsche Welle, "Poland: World Jewish Congress Condemns Anti-Semitic Tradition Revival," 22 April 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/poland-world-jewish-congress-condemns-anti-semitic-tradition-revival/a-48432859>

After the fall of communism, many people in Poland began researching their Jewish roots and some converted to Judaism.<sup>213</sup> Today, estimates of Poland's Jewish community range from 8,000 to as high as 40,000. Poland's right-wing government has been criticized for its stance toward the country's Jewish history, including a 2018 law that made it illegal to blame Poland for Nazi crimes. Polish anti-Semitism is increasingly common on the internet and occasionally surfaces in everyday life.<sup>214, 215, 216</sup>

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- 213 Rina Soloveitchik, "Jews in Poland Fight to Keep the Past Alive," Deutsche Welle, 23 April 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/jews-in-poland-fight-to-keep-the-past-alive/a-43503598>
- 214 Leonid Bershidsky, "Why Polish Jews Are Growing Uneasy," Bloomberg, 26 February 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2018-02-27/polish-jews-are-growing-worried-about-anti-semitism>
- 215 Michel Viatteau, "Polish Anti-Semitism Festers on the Internet," Times of Israel, 4 March 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/polish-anti-semitism-festers-on-the-internet/>
- 216 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Poland," 21 June 2019, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/poland/>

# Polish Cultural Orientation

## Chapter 1 | Profile, Assessment

Read the following statements and answer True or False

1. The first Polish state was established in 1795.  True  False
2. Poland was home to the largest Jewish community in Europe before World War II.  True  False
3. Kraków was completely destroyed during the Nazi occupation.  True  False
4. The Kaliningrad is a Soviet-era tank that was used by the Polish army as the first line of defense against a possible Russian invasion in the 1990s.  True  False
5. Most of Poland's rivers drain northward into the Baltic Sea.  True  False



# Polish Cultural Orientation

## Chapter 1 | Profile, Assessment Answers

1. False:  
Poland traces its national origins to 966 CE. In 1795 Poland ceased to be a state after it was divided for the third time among Russia, Austria, and Prussia. The Polish republic was restored in 1918.
2. True:  
In 1939 more than three million Jews lived in Poland—the largest Jewish community in Europe. By 1945, only an estimated 200,000 had survived the Holocaust.
3. False:  
During the Nazi occupation of Poland, Kraków became the capital of Nazi-occupied Poland. Most of Kraków’s streets and architecture remained intact at the end of World War II.
4. False:  
Kaliningrad is a Russian enclave situated on the northern border of Poland. The border is 210 km (130 mi) long.
5. True:  
Poland’s two longest rivers, the Vistula and Oder, and their tributaries, empty into the Baltic Sea.

## Chapter 2 | Religion



Basilica of Our Lady of Licheń, Stary Licheń, Poland.  
Wikimedia / Czechu81

### Introduction

Over four-fifths of Polish people identify as Catholic, making Poland one of the most uniformly Catholic countries in the world. Since Poland's foundation, the Catholic Church has enjoyed enormous prestige and influence. It acted as a unifying force during tumultuous periods, such as when the Polish state itself ceased to exist. The church also played a pivotal role in the fall of communism. In 1978 the archbishop of Kraków, Karol Cardinal Wojtyła, was elected Pope John Paul II, the first non-Italian pontiff in more than four centuries. Catholicism influences all aspects of Polish life, from rich holiday traditions to elaborate shrines and church buildings. Today, the church and the nationalist government have joined forces to promote conservative values throughout the country.<sup>1,2</sup>

1 Kazimierz Maciej Smogorzewski et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 29 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland/Languages#ref28239>

2 Henry Ridgwell, "Pope John Paul II to Become Saint after Miracle Approved," *Voice of America*, 5 July 2013, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/pope-john-paul-ii-become-saint-after-miracle-approved>

## Major Religions

Roman Catholicism is Poland's main religion, practiced historically by a large majority of Poles. The roots of Catholicism date back to 966 CE, when ruler Mieszko I and members of his court accepted Christianity and were baptized. Today, 86% of the population identifies as Roman Catholic; a majority of Poland's Catholics regularly attend church services.<sup>3, 4</sup> Although Roman Catholicism has been a strong force in Poland throughout the centuries, small communities of other faiths also exist. About 12% of the population do not specify a religious affiliation.<sup>5, 6, 7</sup>

The second-largest religious group in Poland is the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church (Eastern Orthodox Church), with approximately half a million members (1.3% of the population). The number of Orthodox Christian worshippers has grown with the influx of migrant workers from Ukraine.<sup>8, 9</sup> Orthodoxy was introduced to Poland in the ninth century but most Christian Orthodox communities were located in Ukraine and Belarus. Today, there are seven Orthodox dioceses and 11 monasteries across Poland.<sup>10</sup> Autocephalous means that the church enjoys total canonical and administrative independence and the head bishop of the church does not report to any higher-ranking bishop.<sup>11</sup>

The number of Muslims who live in Poland is estimated at between 25,000 and 50,000, including ethnic Tatars who have lived in Poland since the 1500s and Muslim immigrants from many countries. Muslims are the least accepted ethnic or religious group in Poland.<sup>12</sup>

Jews established a presence in Poland in the 13th century. In 1939, Poland was home to more than three million Jews, the second-largest Jewish community in the world. By the end of World War II, 85% of Polish Jews had been killed by the Nazis. Today, some estimates put the number of Jews in Poland between 8,000 and 40,000.<sup>13, 14, 15</sup>

Other small religious groups include Jehovah's Witnesses, Lutherans, Pentecostals, the Old Catholic Mariavite Church, the Polish National Catholic Church, Seventh-day Adventists, Baptists, the Church of Christ, Methodists,

- 3 Polish News, "The Christianization of Poland 1050th Anniversary of the Baptism of the Polish Nation," 14 June 2016, <https://www.polishnews.com/the-christianization-of-poland-1050th-anniversary-of-the-baptism-of-the-polish-nation>
- 4 Rob Schmitz, "As an Election Nears in Poland, Church and State Are a Popular Combination," NPR, 12 October 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/10/12/768537341/as-an-election-nears-in-poland-church-and-state-are-a-popular-combination>
- 5 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Poland," 21 June 2019, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/poland/>
- 6 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992. <http://countrystudies.us/poland/38.htm>
- 7 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 January 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 8 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Poland," 21 June 2019, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/poland/>
- 9 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 January 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 10 Benjamin Elisha Sawe, "Major Religions in Poland," World Atlas, 18 July 2018, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/predominant-religious-beliefs-in-poland.html>
- 11 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Autocephalous Church: Eastern Orthodoxy," 8 July 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/autocephalous-church>
- 12 Agnieszka Dudzińska and Michał Kotnarowski, "Imaginary Muslims: How the Polish Right Frames Islam," Brookings, 24 July 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/imaginary-muslims-how-polands-populists-frame-islam/>
- 13 Michel Viatteau, "Polish Anti-Semitism Festers on the Internet," *Times of Israel*, 4 March 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/polish-anti-semitism-festers-on-the-internet/>
- 14 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Poland," 21 June 2019, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/poland/>
- 15 World Jewish Congress, "Poland," Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland, n.d., <https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/about/communities/PL>

the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and Buddhists.<sup>16</sup>

## Religion and Government

Poland is a secular country with no official religion, although Roman Catholicism is a central part of Polish identity. The Catholic Church supports the ruling conservative PiS government, and PiS returns the favor by maintaining a close relationship with the church, increasing state subsidies for the church, tightening the restrictive laws on abortion, and blocking access to female contraception. Furthermore, the church enjoys a respected status due to its role in preserving Poland's national identity during World War II and through decades of communist rule.<sup>17, 18</sup>

The constitution guarantees freedom of conscience and religion and provides equal protection to all registered religious groups. Freedom of religion includes the freedom to profess or accept a religion as well as to manifest that religion by worshipping, participating in ceremonies and rites, or teaching. Freedom of religion also includes the right to own places of worship and provide religious services. Religious expression may be limited only to defend state security, public order, health, morals, or the rights of others.<sup>19</sup>

There are 166 registered religious groups in Poland that do not have a statutorily defined relationship with the state, and 15 groups that have a special relationship with the state and operate under certain specific legislation. The law, however, provides equal protection to all registered religious groups. Religious groups may register with the government, but registration is not obligatory.<sup>20</sup>

All public and private schools teach voluntary religion classes. Schools must provide instruction in any of the registered faiths if at least seven students request it. Each registered religious group determines the content of classes in its faith and provides the teachers, who receive salaries from the state. Religious organizations may teach their faith in schools if doing so does not infringe on the religious freedom of others.<sup>21</sup> Parents have the right to ensure their children receive religious teaching in accordance with their own religious and philosophical beliefs. Students may request to take an optional ethics class instead of a religion class, but even ethics classes are optional.<sup>22</sup>

Although parliament adopted a resolution condemning anti-Semitism in 2018, incidents in which senior Polish officials and politicians have been actively promoting anti-Jewish sentiments and Holocaust denial have been on the rise. The Israeli embassy in Warsaw protested the increase in anti-Semitic comments in public media. The Polish Council of Christians and Jews continues to organize annual conferences and ceremonies that encourage

16 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Poland," 21 June 2019, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/poland/>

17 Astrid Prange, "How the Catholic Church Ties in to Poland's Judicial Reform," *Deutsche Welle*, 27 July 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/how-the-catholic-church-ties-in-to-polands-judicial-reform/a-39809383>

18 Monika Scislowska, "Poland's Catholic Church: 382 Priests Abused 625 Minors," Associated Press, 14 March 2019, <https://apnews.com/24bc787f45964b63b7046e08dff8b699>

19 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Poland," 21 June 2019, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/poland/>

20 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Poland," 21 June 2019, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/poland/>

21 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Poland," 21 June 2019, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/poland/>

22 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Poland," 21 June 2019, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/poland/>

tolerance and understanding, and a Special Committee for Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Polish Ecumenical Council promotes better understanding among the different Christian religious groups.<sup>23, 24, 25</sup>

The majority of Poles are hostile toward Muslims. Islamophobia increased with the influx of refugees from Middle Eastern countries during the migrant crisis of 2015 and was amplified by politicians and the media. PiS came to power in 2015 on a platform of restoring Polish pride and keeping Muslim refugees out of the country.<sup>26, 27, 28</sup>

## Religion in Daily Life

Roman Catholicism is a prominent part of the Polish national identity, so it is no surprise that Pope John Paul II is considered Poland's national hero. The church remains very influential in small rural areas, but it is beginning to lose its hold in larger cities.<sup>29</sup> In general, 38% of Poles attend church regularly and 17% receive holy communion. There are 25,000 priests in the country and about 2,000 candidates seek to be ordained each year. As of 2020, one-in-four new priests in Europe came from Poland.<sup>30, 31, 32</sup>

Catholics practice confession and about 90% of their children learn to confess in preparation for their first communion. This practice is common even among Poles who are nonobservant Catholics.<sup>33</sup> Nearly 90% of school-age children receive religious instruction. Attendance to religion lessons in some dioceses in the south and southeast is 99%; in Warsaw attendance is lowest, at 75%.<sup>34</sup>

Catholics celebrate life events, including baptism, first communion, confirmation, weddings, and funerals, in the church. Public opinion on ethical issues largely corresponds with that of the Catholic Church, and the pope generally has a strong influence on people's personal views.<sup>35</sup>

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- 23 Christian Davies, "How Poland's Ruling Party Cynically Fuels Anti-Semitism and Holocaust Denial," *Haaretz*, 24 November 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/premium-how-poland-s-ruling-party-cynically-fuels-anti-semitism-and-holocaust-denial-1.8168175>
- 24 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Poland," 21 June 2019, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/poland/>
- 25 Jeremy Sharon, "Polish MP Says Pogroms Were Good for Jews, Assisted Natural Selection," *Jerusalem Post*, 4 March 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/International/Polish-MP-says-Pogroms-were-good-for-Jews-assisted-natural-selection-619640?fbclid=WAR2Cy11qBCIIshH7xz6rNMfZG4lwF5Lwk1BaNaD-9cKFsGmchbce9bfJOKg>
- 26 Shafik Mandhai, "How Big an Issue Is Islamophobia in Poland?" *Al Jazeera*, 13 November 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/11/big-issue-islamophobia-poland-171113064903344.html>
- 27 Jon Henley and Christian Davies, "Poland's Populist Law and Justice Party Win Second Term in Power," *Guardian*, 14 October 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/14/poland-populist-law-and-justice-party-increases-majority>
- 28 Rafal Pankowski and Stephen Piggott, "White Nationalist and Anti-Muslim Sentiment Prevail at Poland's Independence Day March," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, 15 November 2017, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/11/15/white-nationalist-and-anti-muslim-sentiment-prevail-polands-independence-day-march>
- 29 Rob Schmitz, "As an Election Nears in Poland, Church and State Are a Popular Combination," *NPR*, 12 October 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/10/12/768537341/as-an-election-nears-in-poland-church-and-state-are-a-popular-combination>
- 30 Interia/PAP, "Religious Still Strong in Poland," *Remix*, 9 January 2020, <https://rmx.news/article/article/religion-still-strong-in-poland-survey>
- 31 Cameron Doody, "'True Vocations Crisis' in Poland but Country Still Home to One-in-Four New Priests in Europe," *Novena News*, 20 February 2020, <https://novenanews.com/true-vocations-crisis-poland-new-priests-europe/>
- 32 Reddit, "Poland Has the Highest Church Attendance Rate in Europe among People Aged 16–29, by Some Margin," 2019, <https://i.redd.it/govthlqdbzo01.jpg>
- 33 Cultural Atlas, "Catholicism in Poland," n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-religion#polish-culture-religion>
- 34 Interia/PAP, "Religious Still Strong in Poland," *Remix*, 9 January 2020, <https://rmx.news/article/article/religion-still-strong-in-poland-survey>
- 35 Cultural Atlas, "Catholicism in Poland," n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-religion#polish-culture-religion>

Catholic Poles preserve roadside crosses and shrines, called *kapliczka (little chapel)*, and make annual pilgrimages to shrines and sacred springs. The shrines come in different shapes and sizes and their purpose is to express gratitude, ask for reversing misfortune, beg for mercy or a good harvest, and ask for protection from natural disasters and other calamities. Some shrines are used as markers of village boundaries. The majority of shrines were built by local craftsmen and date back centuries.<sup>36, 37, 38</sup>

After the collapse of communism, the government sought unsuccessfully to ban abortion, which had been legal in Poland since 1956. PiS, which is strongly aligned with the church, embraced anti-abortion rhetoric and in March 2016 tried to impose a full ban on abortion. Thousands of women dressed in black marched in Warsaw to protest the ban. Poland has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the European Union.<sup>39, 40</sup>

The Archbishop of Kraków identifies the LGBT community and what he calls “gender ideology” as the new threat to Polish freedom. PiS and a majority of Poles (56%) oppose same-sex marriage and the adoption of children by same-sex couples (opposed by 76%). Some 46% oppose same-sex civil partnerships. However, attitudes toward LGBT rights are changing. Equality parades in cities bring out protesters but do not devolve into violence. Big cities like Warsaw, Kraków, Łódź, Wrocław, and Poznan have lively gay communities.<sup>41, 42, 43</sup> Poland’s first openly gay lawmaker was elected in 2011 and ran for office in 2019.<sup>44</sup>

Revelations about clerical sex abuse rocked Poland in 2019 when a TV documentary exposed to millions of viewers widespread abuse and its cover-up by the church. That year a victim support organization listed 384 victims of sexual abuse and accused church leaders of concealing the crimes. Another report by the Catholic Church itself revealed that the church had records of 382 priests who abused over 625 victims over three decades. The bishops’ conference promised to appoint a legal team to analyze the causes of abuse, set out measures for implementing new procedures, improve awareness, and train the clergy in prevention and counseling. Some Catholics vowed to boycott Mass staged by implicated church leaders as approval ratings of the church dropped to a 24-year low.<sup>45, 46</sup>

36 Countries and Their Cultures, “Poland,” n.d., <https://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Poland.html>

37 Polish Tutor, “The Secret Life of Roadside Shrines,” 11 July 2017, <http://polishtutor.org/secret-life-roadside-shrines#sthash.Dl5cWcBd.dpbs>

38 Polish Tourism Organization, “Religious Travel,” n.d., <https://www.poland.travel/en/discover/religious-travel>

39 Agnieszka Graff, “Poland’s Abortion Ban Is a Test Case for the Catholic Church,” *Financial Times*, 2 April 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/d3d92b9e-3348-11e8-b5bf-23cb17fd1498>

40 Madeline Roache, “Poland Is Trying to Make Abortion Dangerous, Illegal, and Impossible,” *Foreign Policy*, 8 January 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/08/poland-is-trying-to-make-abortion-dangerous-illegal-and-impossible/>

41 Adam Easton, “Polish Election: Leader Targets Gay Rights as Threat to Society,” BBC News, 8 October 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-49904849>

42 Statista, “What is Your Attitude towards LGBT Demands?” 11 September 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1044533/poland-attitude-towards-lgbt-demands/>

43 Just Landed, “Polish Manners & Etiquette,” n.d., <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Poland/Poland-Guide/Culture/Polish-manners-etiquette>

44 Justyna Pawlak, “Progressive Politician Tests Appetite for Less Religious Poland,” Reuters, 28 February 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-politics-biedron/progressive-politician-tests-appetite-for-less-religious-poland-idUSKCN1QH1SR>

45 Jonathan Luxmoore, “Poland’s Church Struggles to Contain Its Latest Crisis,” National Catholic Reporter, 20 June 2019, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/accountability/polands-church-struggles-contain-its-latest-crisis>

46 Monika Scislowska, “Poland’s Catholic Church: 382 Priests Abused 625 Minors,” Associated Press, 14 March 2019, <https://apnews.com/24bc787f45964b63b7046e08dff8b699>

## Religious Events

### *Three Kings Day—January 6*

Three Kings Day (Dzień Trzech Króli), or Epiphany, is an important Catholic celebration. Observed on 6 January, this day commemorates the three kings who came to visit the newborn Jesus with their offerings. In Poland, it is a bank holiday, which means that government offices, banks, post offices, shopping malls, restaurants, and airlines are closed.<sup>47, 48</sup>

On this day, there are colorful processions all over Poland. People are dressed in costumes of the three kings, knights, and pages and offer candies and gifts to children. The processions are accompanied by groups of young men who sing carols while dressed up like goats, horses, or shepherds. Pieces of chalk that were blessed in the church are used to mark front doors with “K+M+B,” which stand for the initials of the Three Kings: Kaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. A king cake (*ciasto trzech króli*) is baked with an almond or a coin inside; whoever finds the almond or coin in their slice is going to be happy all year and is named king or queen.<sup>49, 50, 51, 52</sup>

### *Easter*

Easter (Wielkanoc) is the second-most important religious holiday of the year. It celebrates the resurrection of Jesus. The dates of the holiday vary from year to year and usually fall in March or April.<sup>53</sup>

As Easter approaches, people start bringing tree branches and bouquets of dried flowers to the church. During the week before Easter, known as Holy Week, some Poles engage in spring cleaning. In the countryside, villagers repaint their barns while others fast. Families visit shrines that represent the tomb of Christ. Classical music concerts take place in the cities. Among the most prominent is the Beethoven Easter Festival in Warsaw. On Palm Sunday, which commemorates the day Jesus entered Jerusalem, people attend church with willow branches or colorful woven dried branches that represent palms.<sup>54, 55</sup>

On the Saturday before Easter Sunday, Poles paint hard-boiled eggs (pisanki) and prepare Easter baskets (swieconka) with Easter eggs, sausage or ham, mustard, bread, cake, and an Easter lamb made of sugar (or sometimes plastic). The baskets are taken to church to be blessed. On Easter Sunday, families gather to eat a breakfast of ham, sausage, roast meats, pâté, eggs, horseradish relish, bread, and a variety of Easter cakes. Before the meal, diners share a special wafer (opłatek) and Easter eggs from the basket.<sup>56, 57</sup>

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- 47 Office Holidays, “Three Kings’ Day in Poland in 2021,” n.d., <https://www.officeholidays.com/holidays/poland/epiphany>
- 48 Ewelina Nurczyk, “Epiphany or Three Kings’ Day in Poland,” Careers in Poland, 4 January 2016, <https://www.careersinpoland.com/article/customs/epiphany-or-three-kings-day-in-poland>
- 49 Polish Institute New Delhi, “Three Kings Day Celebrations in Poland,” n.d., <https://polishinstitute.in/three-kings-day-celebrations-in-poland/>
- 50 Kasia, “Epiphany, Celebrating the Three Kings in Poland,” Transparent, 6 January 2017, <https://blogs.transparent.com/polish/epiphany-celebrating-the-three-kings-in-poland/>
- 51 Kate Moyes, “Three Kings Day Parade in Krakow,” Local Life, n.d., <https://www.local-life.com/krakow/articles/three-kings-day-parade-krakow-poland>
- 52 Ewelina Nurczyk, “Epiphany or Three Kings’ Day in Poland,” Careers in Poland, 4 January 2016, <https://www.careersinpoland.com/article/customs/epiphany-or-three-kings-day-in-poland>
- 53 Office Holidays, “Easter Monday in Poland 2020,” n.d., <https://www.officeholidays.com/holidays/poland/easter-monday>
- 54 Marta Jazowska, “Polish Easter Traditions,” Culture.pl, 10 March 2014, <https://culture.pl/en/article/polish-easter-traditions>
- 55 Kerry Kubilius, “Easter in Poland,” Trip Savvy, 26 June 2019, <https://www.tripsavvy.com/easter-in-poland-1501926>
- 56 Marta Jazowska, “Polish Easter Traditions,” Culture.pl, 10 March 2014, <https://culture.pl/en/article/polish-easter-traditions>
- 57 Polish Pod 101, “Smigus Dyngus Day: Easter Monday in Poland,” 16 April 2019, <https://www.polishpod101.com/blog/2019/04/16/easter-in-poland/>

On Easter Monday, also called Wet Monday (Śmigus-Dyngus), men and boys throw water on girls or vice-versa. Married women are protected from being drenched with water.<sup>58</sup> Easter Monday is a public holiday enjoyed by Catholics and secular Poles. Easter Sunday and Wet Monday are bank holidays.<sup>59, 60</sup>

### ***Pentecost Sunday***

Pentecost Sunday (also called Whitsun) is observed on the seventh Sunday after Easter. The name comes from the Greek word *pentekostos* (fifty), as the holiday takes place 50 days after Easter. Pentecost commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus, an event considered the birthday of Christianity. Pentecost Sunday is also known as “Green Holiday,” and people decorate their houses with tree branches in hopes of blessings. Pentecost is a bank holiday.<sup>61, 62</sup>

### ***Corpus Christi***

The Festival of Corpus Christi (Boże Ciało) is celebrated on the second Thursday after Pentecost, or 60 days after Easter. This festival honors the practice of the Holy Eucharist, or Communion, which represents the flesh and blood of Jesus. In Poland, the celebration commemorates an event that occurred in 1263 in the town of Bolesno, when the church wafer that was held in the hands of a priest started to bleed. Corpus Christi is a public holiday in Poland.<sup>63 64, 65</sup>

After the church service, there are processions in many cities and villages. A priest holding a vessel known as a monstrance under a canopy leads the procession. The faithful follow him, some dressed in folk costumes, singing religious hymns. Children dressed in white throw flower petals on the streets to welcome Jesus, who is believed to walk with the people during the procession. Traffic is usually stopped during the procession. In some towns and villages, people create floral carpets. Many homes are decorated with religious icons.<sup>66, 67</sup>

### ***Assumption Day—August 15***

The Assumption of Mary is a public holiday that takes place on 15 August. It is also Polish Army Day, which commemorates the anniversary of the Battle of Warsaw during the Polish-Soviet War in 1920.<sup>68, 69</sup>

This holiday honors the Catholic belief that God assumed the Virgin Mary, body and soul, into heaven after she died. It is the main holiday that celebrates the Virgin Mary. Pilgrims from Poland and other countries pray and sing while walking hundreds of miles for many days to visit the shrine of Jasna Góra in Czestochowa. The faithful attend Mass and services that honor Polish soldiers who died fighting for the country. In Warsaw, a changing of the guard ceremony takes place near the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.<sup>70</sup>

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- 58 Marta Jazowska, “Polish Easter Traditions,” Culture.pl, 10 March 2014, <https://culture.pl/en/article/polish-easter-traditions>
- 59 Office Holidays, “Easter Monday in Poland 2020,” n.d., <https://www.officeholidays.com/holidays/poland/easter-monday>
- 60 Kerry Kubilius, “Easter in Poland,” Trip Savvy, 26 June 2019, <https://www.tripsavvy.com/easter-in-poland-1501926>
- 61 Office Holidays, “Pentecost Sunday in Poland in 2020,” n.d., <https://www.officeholidays.com/holidays/poland/pentecost-sunday>
- 62 David Hughes, “Pentecost 2016: What is Whitsun and Why Is It Celebrated?” *Independent*, 15 May 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/pentecost-2016-whitsun-whit-sunday-what-is-it-when-why-celebrated-christianity-christian-peter-a7030141.html>
- 63 Time and Date, “Corpus Christi in Poland,” n.d., <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/poland/corpus-christi>
- 64 Office Holidays, “Corpus Christi in Poland in 2020,” n.d., <https://www.officeholidays.com/holidays/poland/corpus-christi>
- 65 Poland In, “Corpus Christi Celebrated All over Poland,” 20 June 2019, <https://polandin.com/43152972/corpus-christi-celebrated-all-over-poland>
- 66 Ewelina Nurczyk, “Corpus Christi—Religious and Bank Holiday in Poland,” *Careers in Poland*, 24 May 2016, <https://www.careersinpoland.com/article/customs/corpus-christi-religious-and-bank-holiday-in-poland>
- 67 Time and Date, “Corpus Christi in Poland,” n.d., <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/poland/corpus-christi>
- 68 Time and Date, “Assumption of Mary in Poland,” n.d., <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/poland/assumption-of-mary>
- 69 Office Holidays, “Assumption of Mary in Poland in 2020,” n.d., <https://www.officeholidays.com/holidays/poland/assumption-day>
- 70 Office Holidays, “Assumption of Mary in Poland in 2020,” n.d., <https://www.officeholidays.com/holidays/poland/assumption-day>



## ***All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day—November 1 and 2***

All Saints' Day (Wszystkich Świętych) takes place on 1 November and is a public holiday. On this day special church services are held to commemorate saints. People lay flowers and light candles on the graves of deceased family members and friends. This tradition continues through to All Souls' Day (Dzien Zaduszny or Zaduszki), which falls on 2 November but is not a public holiday.<sup>71, 72, 73</sup>

## ***St. Andrew's Day—November 30***

St. Andrew's Day, which falls on 30 November, marks the beginning of Advent. On the eve of this holiday, people eat as much as they can since it is the last day they before a prolonged period of fasting. On the weekend that precedes this day, clubs organize parties that last well into the night. Because St. Andrew (Andrzejki) is the patron of girls and a confidant of their hopes and prayers for getting married, Poles believe that he can guide young unmarried women in choosing their future husband. Men used to have their own separate day, but today the tradition includes men as well.<sup>74, 75, 76</sup>

Some St. Andrew's traditions involve fortune-telling games and pagan rites. People pour hot wax into water through the hole of an old key and try to foretell the future from the shape of the shadow of the cold wax. Women peel the skin of an apple and throw it over their shoulders; the letter that is formed by the peel is the first letter of the name of their future husband.<sup>77, 78</sup>

## ***Christmas Day—December 25***

Christmas Day, celebrating the birth of Jesus, is a public holiday in Poland.<sup>79</sup> Families prepare for the holiday by cleaning, cooking, buying gifts, and decorating. Town squares are decorated with Christmas trees and lights, Christmas carols and songs are played in many places, and holiday markets open around the country, selling typical foods, gifts, and souvenirs. On Christmas Eve the Christmas tree is decorated with gingerbread, colored wafers, cookies, fruit, candy, straw ornaments, painted eggshells, and store-bought ornaments. One Christmas tradition includes putting sheaves of wheat, rye, hay, or straw under dining tables to bring good crops or fortune.<sup>80, 81</sup>

Christmas Eve is a day of fasting and people watch for the first star to appear in the night sky before sitting down to eat. Before the Christmas Eve dinner, family members share the Christmas wafer (oplatek) and wish each other a good year. Twelve different dishes are usually served, to honor the Twelve Apostles. These dishes include

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- 71 Time and Date, "All Saints' Day in Poland," n.d., <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/poland/all-saints-day>
- 72 Xperience Poland, "All Saints' Day in Poland: How Poles Celebrate the 1st of November," 21 October 2018, <https://www.xperiencepoland.com/all-saints-day-poland/>
- 73 Culture.pl, "All Souls' Day: The Tradition of Zaduszki in Poland," 30 October 2014, <https://culture.pl/en/article/all-souls-day-the-tradition-of-zaduszki-in-poland>
- 74 Ewelina Nurczyk, "Andrzejki—St Andrew's Day," Careers in Poland, 27 November 2015, <https://www.careersinpoland.com/article/customs/andrzejki-st-andrews-day>
- 75 Ewelina Nurczyk, "Andrzejki—St Andrew's Day," Careers in Poland, 27 November 2015, <https://www.careersinpoland.com/article/customs/andrzejki-st-andrews-day>
- 76 Polish for Expats, "Andrzejki—St Andrew's Day Celebration in Poland," n.d., <http://polishforexpats.pl/andrzejki-st-andrews-day-celebration-in-poland/>
- 77 Poland Unraveled, "Polish St. Andrew's Day—Andrzejki," 26 September 2018, <https://www.polandunraveled.com/polish-st-andrew-day-andrzejki/>
- 78 Ewelina Nurczyk, "Andrzejki—St Andrew's Day," Careers in Poland, 27 November 2015, <https://www.careersinpoland.com/article/customs/andrzejki-st-andrews-day>
- 79 Time and Date, "Christmas Day in Poland," n.d., <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/poland/1st-day-of-christmas>
- 80 Kerry Kubilius, "Christmas Traditions in Poland," Trip Savvy, 2 January 2020, <https://www.tripsavvy.com/poland-christmas-traditions-1501911>
- 81 Poland Unraveled, "Polish Christmas Traditions," 26 October 2018, <https://www.polandunraveled.com/polish-christmas-traditions/>

herring in cream and oil, cabbage with peas, carp, dumplings (*pierogi*), and *borscht*. The meal does not include meat, only fish. An extra seat and place setting are prepared in case someone comes unannounced. Santa Claus (Mikolaj) does not come on Christmas Eve, having appeared earlier, on 6 December, for the feast of St. Nicholas. After the meal people exchange gifts and later attend a midnight Mass.<sup>82, 83, 84</sup> On Christmas day, families go to church, sing carols, and visit relatives. Christmas Day dinner often includes a goose as the center of the meal. It is common to give small gifts to postal workers and sanitation workers during Christmas.<sup>85, 86, 87</sup>

### **St. Stephen's Day—December 26**

Boxing Day is known as Holy Szczepan or St. Stephen's Day. It is the last day of Christmas, when Poles commemorate St. Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian faith. St. Stephen's Day is a public holiday.<sup>88</sup>

## **Places of Worship**

There are more than 200 Catholic sanctuaries in Poland. Most are dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and some are dedicated to Jesus Christ or to saints. Each sanctuary, shrine, or church features a miraculous painting or figurine. Some are close to a spring believed to have healing properties. Poles and Catholics from other nations participate in pilgrimages to calvaries—sculpted representation of the crucifixion erected outdoors—and complexes of churches, chapels, and monasteries that recreate the Way of the Cross in Jerusalem.<sup>89, 90</sup>

### **Kalwaria Zebrzydowska**

The Kalwaria Zebrzydowska complex, founded in 1602, is the first large-scale calvary built in Poland. It consists of a monastery, a number of churches, chapels, and other architectural structures, and contains a painting of Our Lady of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. Millions of pilgrims visit the complex each year. It was frequently visited by Pope John Paul II and is the only calvary on the UNESCO World Heritage List.<sup>91, 92, 93</sup>

### **Jasna Gora**

Located in southern Poland, 225 km (140 mi) from Warsaw, Jasna Gora Monastery in the city of Częstochowa is home to the country's national shrine. The chapel of Jasna Gora (meaning "bright mountain") contains a baroque altar that displays the country's most important religious icon, the Black Madonna, also called Our Lady of Częstochowa and the Queen of Poland.<sup>94, 95</sup>

82 Poland Unraveled, "Polish Christmas Traditions," 26 October 2018, <https://www.polandunraveled.com/polish-christmas-traditions/>

83 Kerry Kubilius, "Christmas Traditions in Poland," Trip Savvy, 2 January 2020, <https://www.tripsavvy.com/poland-christmas-traditions-1501911>

84 Time and Date, "Christmas Day in Poland," n.d., <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/poland/1st-day-of-christmas>

85 Poland Unraveled, "Polish Christmas Traditions," 26 October 2018, <https://www.polandunraveled.com/polish-christmas-traditions/>

86 Time and Date, "Christmas Day in Poland," n.d., <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/poland/1st-day-of-christmas>

87 Just Landed, "Polish Manners & Etiquette," n.d., <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Poland/Poland-Guide/Culture/Polish-manners-etiquette>

88 Kerry Kubilius, "Christmas Traditions in Poland," Trip Savvy, 2 January 2020, <https://www.tripsavvy.com/poland-christmas-traditions-1501911>

89 Polish Tourism Organization, "5 Religious Treasures of Poland," n.d., <https://www.poland.travel/en/discover/religious-travel>

90 Krakow Travel, "Polish Sanctuaries," n.d., <https://krakow-travel.com/shrines-of-poland.b.97>

91 UNESCO, "Kalwaria Zebrzydowska: The Mannerist Architectural and Park Landscape Complex and Pilgrimage Park," 1999, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/905/>

92 Polish Tourism Organization, "5 Religious Treasures of Poland," n.d., <https://www.poland.travel/en/heritage/unesco-sites/kalwaria-zebrzydowska-passion-plays>

93 Polish Tourism Organization, "Jerusalem Served as Example," n.d., <https://www.poland.travel/en/discover/religious-travel/jerusalem-served-as-example>

94 Kerry Kubilius, "Jasna Gora Monastery, Poland," Trip Savvy, 7 June 2019, <https://www.tripsavvy.com/jasna-gora-monastery-poland-1501975>

95 Kerry Kubilius, "Jasna Gora Monastery, Poland," Trip Savvy, 7 June 2019, <https://www.tripsavvy.com/jasna-gora-monastery-poland-1501975>

Jasna Gora attracts more than four million pilgrims from 80 countries each year; some make the trek on foot from Warsaw. In 1991, Pope John Paul II visited the monastery to celebrate International Youth Prayer Day. In 2016, Pope Francis visited the shrine to commemorate the 1,050th anniversary of the baptism of Poland. According to legend, St. Luke the Evangelist painted the image of the Black Madonna on a table built by Jesus, while Mary recounted the events in the life of Jesus, which were later used in his Gospel.<sup>96, 97, 98</sup>

### ***The Basilica of Our Lady of Licheń***

*The Basilica of Our Lady of Licheń in Licheń Stary is the largest church in Poland and the 12th largest church in the world. Construction of the church started in 1994. There are five chapels in the lower part of the basilica; the bell tower is 65 m (213 ft) high. One of the chapels contains the largest organ in Poland. The sanctuary is dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows, Queen of Poland. The Miraculous Icon of Our Lady of Licheń is located at the heart of the sanctuary. The church is visited by more than two million pilgrims every year.*<sup>99, 100, 101</sup>

### ***Niepokalanów***

*Niepokalanów means Town of the Immaculate Virgin. The monastery and church complex is located about 40 km (25 mi) west of Warsaw. The founder, a Polish Franciscan friar named Maksymilian Kolbe, established the monastery in 1927. During World War II, he was sent to Auschwitz because he was hiding Jews; in 1982 he was canonized as a martyr. The Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succor, which was raised to the rank of basilica minor by Pope John Paul II, towers above the monastery complex. The complex attracts almost half a million pilgrims and tourists every year.*<sup>102, 103</sup>

### ***Wadowice***

*Wadowice is Pope John Paul II's hometown, located about 48 km (30 mi) southwest of Kraków. Each year, thousands of pilgrims and tourists come to Wadowice to see the modest apartment building on 7 Koscielna Street where John Paul II, who was born in 1920, lived as a boy. The place was made into a museum where visitors can see the possessions of the future pope's family and taste the *kremowka cream pastry*, believed to be the pope's favorite.*<sup>104, 105</sup>

96 Elise Harris, "Who Is 'The Black Madonna' and Why Is She So Important?" Catholic News Agency, 19 July 2016, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/who-is-the-black-madonna-and-why-is-she-so-important-63754>

97 Drusilla Menaker, "Poland's Black Madonna," *New York Times*, 22 July 1990, <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/07/22/travel/poland-s-black-madonna.html>

98 Kerry Kubilius, "Jasna Gora Monastery, Poland," Trip Savvy, 7 June 2019, <https://www.tripsavvy.com/jasna-gora-monastery-poland-1501975>

99 Polish Tourism Organization, "5 Religious Treasures of Poland," n.d., <https://www.poland.travel/en/discover/religious-travel/5-religious-treasures-of-poland>

100 Catholic Travel Guide, "Lichen Stary, Poland: Basilica of Our Lady of Lichen," n.d., <https://thecatholictravelguide.com/destinations/poland/lichen-stary-poland-basilica-lady-lichen/>

101 Lichen, "The Basilica," n.d., [http://www.lichen.pl/en/221/the\\_basilica](http://www.lichen.pl/en/221/the_basilica)

102 Polish Tourism Organization, "Shrine of Our Mary Immaculate in Niepokalanow," n.d., <https://www.poland.travel/en/monuments/shrine-of-our-mary-immaculate-in-niepokalanow>

103 Krakow Travel, "Sanctuary in Niepokalanów and St Maksymilian Kolbe," n.d., <https://krakow-travel.com/sanctuary-niepokalanow.n.116>

104 Pola Henderson, "Polish Hometown of Pope John Paul II Prepares for Influx of Visitors," CNN, 2 June 2014, <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/poland-wadowice-pope/index.html>

105 Krakow Info, "The Birthplace of Pope John Paul II," n.d., <http://www.krakow-info.com/wadowice.htm>

## Behavior in Places of Worship

Worshippers and visitors who enter a church should dress in neat, clean, and modest attire. It is important to show respect, even if the place of worship has become a tourist destination. During services, people should refrain from distracting behavior; cigarette butts and gum should be disposed of before entering. Visitors should not take photographs without permission. Those who arrive late to a service should sit in the back and avoid disrupting others. They should not talk, bring food or coffee into the service, or smoke inside a church.<sup>106, 107</sup>

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106 Dianne Isbell, "Pay Attention and Don't Be Late. The Do's and Don'ts of Church Etiquette," Belleville News-Democrat, 8 September 2019, <https://www.bnd.com/living/magazine/article234739237.html>

107 William Saunders, "Appropriate Behavior in Church," Catholic Education Resource Center, n.d., <http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/appropriate-behavior-in-church.html>

# Polish Cultural Orientation

## Chapter 2 | Religion, Assessment

Read the following statements and answer True or False

1. The Black Madonna is Poland's most important religious icon.  True  False
2. Poland's official state religion is Roman Catholicism.  True  False
3. Religious education is mandatory in Poland.  True  False
4. Poles celebrate the Corpus Christi holiday with colorful processions in cities and villages.  True  False
5. Poland has the largest Jewish community in Europe.  True  False

# Polish Cultural Orientation

## Chapter 2 | Religion, Assessment Answers

1. True:  
The monastery chapel in Jasna Gora contains the country's most important religious icon, the Black Madonna. The city of Jasna Gora attracts more than 4.5 million pilgrims a year from 80 countries.
2. False:  
Poland is a secular country with no official religion. However, Roman Catholicism is Poland's main religion, with 86% of the population identifying as Roman Catholics and many regularly attending services.
3. False:  
Public and private schools teach voluntary religion classes. Students may request to take an optional ethics class instead of a religion class, but even ethics classes are optional.
4. True:  
The Festival of Corpus Christi begins with church services around the country followed by processions in many cities and villages.
5. False:  
Poland was home to the second-largest Jewish community in the world until World War II. During the war, 85% of Polish Jews were murdered by the Nazis. Today, some estimates put the number of Jews in Poland at between 8,000 and 40,000.

## Chapter 3 | Traditions



Traditional costumes from Łowicz.  
Flickr / Paweł Witan

### Introduction

Religion and conservatism pervade Poland's cultural values and social customs. Poles value cordiality and kindness, and are known to often help one another when the need arises. Although their demeanor may appear formal or conservative, especially in the way they treat women and strangers, Poles tend to be quite unreserved around friends and acquaintances.<sup>1</sup>

Poles have a reputation for often being honest and open about their emotions and opinions. It is a cultural norm for Poles to share their thoughts, loudly if necessary and with humor, even when they differ, and they do not see disagreements as a barrier to personal rapport. The general approach is optimism and straightforwardness. The centuries-long struggle for freedom and years of hardship under communist rule have taught Poles to minimize problems and improvise solutions in times of crisis.<sup>2</sup>

The legendary hospitality that Poles are famous for has been tainted in recent years by overt hostility toward refugees from war-torn countries, a resurgence of anti-Semitism, and vitriol directed at the LGBT community.<sup>3</sup>

1 Cultural Atlas, "Polish Culture: Core Concepts," n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-core-concepts#polish-culture-core-concepts>

2 Cultural Atlas, "Polish Culture: Core Concepts," n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-core-concepts#polish-culture-core-concepts>

3 Wall Street International, "Polish Hospitality," 12 November 2019, <https://wsimag.com/art/58801-polish-hospitality>

## Honors and Values

Religious teachings of forgiveness and mercy are reflected in the Polish sense of justice and morality. Poles tend to empathize quickly and strive to be perceived as honorable by their fellow countrymen and women. Old-fashioned courtesy and displays of consideration for other people, especially the elderly and the lesser-abled, are common. Giving up a seat to an elderly person or a pregnant woman, opening a door and making way for women, lending a hand to someone who has fallen, and saying hello and goodbye to people in an elevator are all considered acceptable behavior.<sup>4, 5</sup>

Poles are also known for laughing at themselves. They integrate humor into conversation, but it may be nuanced and may not always be evident to people who do not understand Polish. People often exaggerate the underlying irony of situations and use a lot of sarcasm.<sup>6</sup>

Punctuality is expected and is very important. “Time is money” is a popular Polish expression. Arriving late is considered bad manners. It is important to explain the circumstances that caused tardiness, otherwise a person may appear unreliable and disrespectful. Nevertheless, people in higher positions might arrive late for meetings to demonstrate their status within an organization’s hierarchy.<sup>7, 8, 9, 10</sup>

## Formulaic Codes of Politeness

Poles discuss politics and history fervently among themselves. They may get emotional and raise their voices over one another; use theatrical language, metaphors, and implied meanings; and justify and defend themselves loudly if they feel that they have been wrongly criticized. However, while they communicate frankly with each other, they tend to soften the conversation with a more indirect approach when a foreigner is around or to avoid the escalation of an argument.<sup>11, 12</sup>

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

*Exchange 1*

Friends may walk arm-in-arm and often touch each other. Parents show affection to their children into adulthood, but public displays of affection are not common. Direct eye contact is the norm, especially during greetings

- 4 Just Landed, “Polish Manners & Etiquette,” n.d., <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Poland/Poland-Guide/Culture/Polish-manners-etiquette>
- 5 Cultural Atlas, “Polish Culture: Core Concepts,” n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-core-concepts#polish-culture-core-concepts>
- 6 Cultural Atlas, “Polish Culture,” n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-etiquette>
- 7 Katarzyna E. Slobodzian-Taylor, “Polish Business Etiquette—Four Rules to Remember,” Master Mind Translations, 2 December 2014, <https://www.mastermindtranslations.co.uk/polish-business-etiquette/>
- 8 Passport to Trade, “Business Etiquette in Poland,” n.d., <https://businessculture.org/eastern-europe/poland/business-etiquette/>
- 9 Santander, “Poland: Business Practices,” n.d., <https://santandertrade.com/en/portal/establish-overseas/poland/business-practices>
- 10 David Kelly, “Cultural Tips for Doing Business in Poland,” Trip Savvy, 16 May 2017, <https://www.tripsavvy.com/doing-business-poland-4047870>
- 11 Cultural Atlas, “Polish Culture,” n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-etiquette>
- 12 Just Landed, “Polish Manners & Etiquette,” n.d., <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Poland/Poland-Guide/Culture/Polish-manners-etiquette>



and introductions. People rarely smile at strangers in public, but once they are introduced, they become more animated. Pointing directly at a person's forehead is offensive. The gesture of slapping one's forehead lightly implies stupidity in another. The middle-finger gesture means the same in Poland as in the United States. Making a fist with the thumb sticking out between the index and middle finger is called the "figa" (fig) and represents scarcity, as figs were rare during the communist era. Today, this gesture is used as an insult meaning "you'll get nothing."<sup>13, 14</sup>

### Good evening!

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

Exchange 2

People act formally when they meet strangers for the first time. A standard formal greeting is done with a firm handshake, direct eye contact, and a smile. Men usually greet women before men and older women before younger women. Female friends may kiss each other three times on alternating cheeks. Men and women may also do this when they are close friends.<sup>15, 16</sup>

### How is your family?

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

Exchange 3

The common verbal greetings are *cześć* (hello), *dzien dobry* (good day) and *dobry wieczór* (good evening). Poles use *pan* (mister) for men and *pani* (miss) for women together with the surname when they greet each other. In a formal setting, people are addressed by their job title, as in *pani profesor* (miss professor). First names are used among friends. An older Polish man may kiss the hand of a woman as a way of greeting.<sup>17, 18</sup>

It is advisable not to shake hands at the door when invited to someone's home. According to tradition, early Slavs buried the ashes of their dead near doorways, so meeting and greeting on top of their burial disturbs them. Therefore, a guest should first enter the home and only then conduct the greetings.<sup>19</sup>

13 Cultural Atlas, "Polish Culture: Communication," n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-communication#polish-culture-communication>

14 Just Landed, "Polish Manners & Etiquette," n.d., <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Poland/Poland-Guide/Culture/Polish-manners-etiquette>

15 Cultural Atlas, "Polish Culture," n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-communication#polish-culture-communication>

16 Just Landed, "Polish Manners & Etiquette," n.d., <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Poland/Poland-Guide/Culture/Polish-manners-etiquette>

17 Just Landed, "Polish Manners & Etiquette," n.d., <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Poland/Poland-Guide/Culture/Polish-manners-etiquette>

18 Cultural Atlas, "Polish Culture," n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-greetings#polish-culture-greetings>

19 Wojciech Oleksiak, "How to Survive a Polish Dinner Party," Culture.pl, 26 October 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/how-to-survive-a-polish-dinner-party>

## Hospitality and Gift Giving

Hospitality is an important aspect of Polish culture. When entering a Polish home, it is customary in many places to take off the shoes, especially in the winter when boots can be muddy or wet. It is not customary to give a tour of a home, and Poles generally do not like to do it. Always ask for permission to smoke indoors.<sup>20, 21</sup>

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

Exchange 4

When visiting a home, it is polite to bring flowers for the hostess. Flowers should come in an odd number. It is best to give gerberas since red or white flowers, especially roses, are reserved for lovers, carnations are a symbol of the labor movement, and chrysanthemums are used in funerals. Other gifts can be hard liquors, liqueurs, gourmet coffee, chocolate, sweets, or perfume. Gifts should not be excessively expensive since they might embarrass the recipient. Poles usually do not open gifts in front of the giver.<sup>22, 23, 24</sup>

## Eating Customs and Food

Poles eat five meals a day. Breakfast (*śniadanie*) is eaten around 8 a.m. This meal consists of coffee or strong tea, bread topped with cold cuts or sausage (*kielbasa*), tomatoes, and scrambled eggs. Breakfast can also include marinated herring and cheese with radishes. Second breakfast (*drugie śniadanie*) is eaten between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. This meal consists of bread and kielbasa, sandwiches with hard-boiled eggs or smoked sheep cheese (*oscypek*), and pickles. Lunch (*obiad*) is the most important meal of the day and is served between 2 and 3 p.m. or between 4 and 5:30 pm. This meal consists of several courses such as soup, meat, and side dishes. In the early evening, Poles enjoy a sweet evening snack (*podwieczorek*) with cakes or pastries such as spiced apple cake (*szarlotka*) and cheesecake. Dinner or supper (*kolacja*) is a light meal eaten usually at 7 or 8 p.m.<sup>25, 26, 27</sup>

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

Exchange 5

20 Just Landed, "Polish Manners & Etiquette," n.d., <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Poland/Poland-Guide/Culture/Polish-manners-etiquette>

21 Wojciech Oleksiak, "How to Survive a Polish Dinner Party," Culture.pl, 26 October 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/how-to-survive-a-polish-dinner-party>

22 Cultural Atlas, "Polish Culture," n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-etiquette>

23 Just Landed, "Polish Manners & Etiquette," n.d., <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Poland/Poland-Guide/Culture/Polish-manners-etiquette>

24 Wojciech Oleksiak, "How to Survive a Polish Dinner Party," Culture.pl, 26 October 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/how-to-survive-a-polish-dinner-party>

25 Marek Kępa and Magdalena Kasprzyk-Chevriaux, "A Typical Daily Menu in Poland," Culture.pl, n.d., <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-typical-daily-menu-in-poland>

26 Transparent, "Doing Business in Poland—Do They Know It Is Lunchtime?" n.d., <https://blogs.transparent.com/polish/doing-business-in-poland-do-they-know-it-is-lunchtime/>

27 Cultural Atlas, "Polish Culture," n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-etiquette>

The Sunday meal is the biggest and most important meal of the week, served at around 3 p.m. This is the time when the family gathers around the table to eat together. Eating starts when everybody takes a seat at the table and the host says, “*smacznego*” (enjoy your meal). Talking during the meal is welcomed, as is having seconds to make the host happy and proud. When sharing a meal in a Polish home, it is important to praise the food and thank the host at the end of a meal by saying, “*dziękuję*” (thank you).<sup>28, 29</sup>

### The food tastes so good.

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

Exchange 6

Some Catholic Poles do not eat meat on Fridays, opting instead for fish. Poles may say grace or a prayer of thanks before a meal. It is traditional to offer alcohol with meals, but people do not start drinking before someone—usually the host—proposes a toast. Poles toast for health and friendship. If a guest does not drink alcohol, it is important to make it clear. A polite gesture of refusal of food or alcohol will not be seen as offensive.<sup>30, 31</sup>

A Polish meal usually starts with soup. The best-known Polish soup is *borscht*, made with beetroot and served with sour cream. But Polish cuisine offers a large variety of soups such as pickled cabbage, chicken noodle, pickled cucumber, tomato with rice or noodles, thick pea, dill, sour rye with potatoes, beef tripe, mushroom with cream, and cold beetroot with hard-boiled eggs.<sup>32, 33</sup>

Wheat, rye, buckwheat, and barley are the most important dietary staples in Poland, used in bread, noodles, dumplings, soups, and side dishes. Bread is served without butter. Potatoes, beets, cabbage, carrots, mushrooms, and cucumbers are consumed regularly. Common herbs and spices include marjoram, dill, caraway seeds, parsley, and pepper. Boiled potatoes are served as a side dish with pork, poultry, or fish. Beef, ham, and sausage are also eaten regularly. Poles are known for their pickled dill cucumbers, but cucumbers are also served as a salad with sour cream, onion, and dill.<sup>34, 35</sup>

The national dish of Poland is *bigos*, known as hunter’s stew, made with cabbage, sauerkraut, *kielbasa*, bacon, pork, and mushrooms. Famous Polish dishes include cabbage leaves stuffed with ground meat and rice (*golabki*) and fresh ham served with a side of horseradish (*golonka*). Smoked and pickled fish, especially herring, are also common.<sup>36</sup>

Sweet or savory *kopytka* is the Polish gnocchi. It can be sprinkled with either sugar and melted butter or fried onion.<sup>37</sup> The famous *pierogi* is a semicircular dumpling filled with onion and potatoes, often topped with onion

28 Wojciech Oleksiak, “How to Survive a Polish Dinner Party,” Culture.pl, 26 October 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/how-to-survive-a-polish-dinner-party>

29 Cultural Atlas, “Polish Culture,” n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-etiquette>

30 Cultural Atlas, “Polish Culture,” n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-etiquette>

31 Just Landed, “Polish Manners & Etiquette,” n.d., <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Poland/Poland-Guide/Culture/Polish-manners-etiquette>

32 Stay Poland, “Polish Food,” n.d., <https://www.staypoland.com/poland/polish-food/>

33 Food in Every Country, “Poland,” n.d., <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Kazakhstan-to-South-Africa/Poland.html>

34 Food in Every Country, “Poland,” n.d., <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Kazakhstan-to-South-Africa/Poland.html>

35 Etiquette Scholar, “Polish Dining Etiquette,” n.d., [https://www.etiquettescholar.com/dining\\_etiquette/table-etiquette/europe-e-dinner\\_etiquette/polish.html](https://www.etiquettescholar.com/dining_etiquette/table-etiquette/europe-e-dinner_etiquette/polish.html)

36 Food in Every Country, “Poland,” n.d., <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Kazakhstan-to-South-Africa/Poland.html>

37 Victoria Bak, “21 Polish Foods You Need to Try that Aren’t Pierogi,” Spoon University, n.d., <https://spoonuniversity.com/lifestyle/polish-foods-that-arent-pierogi>

and pork crackling and a side of sour cream. There are many varieties of *pierogi* but *pierogi ruskie* is regarded as the best by Poles.<sup>38</sup>

Popular Polish deserts include *kompot*, a mixture of boiled fruit such as apples, plums, and berries and sugar; *babka*, yeast bread filled with raisins, currants, rum, and walnuts; cheesecake; apple cake; and poppy seed cake. Coffee, tea, milk, buttermilk, and fruit syrup are consumed regularly. Vodka distilled from rye is the national drink.<sup>39, 40, 41</sup>

*Zapiekanka*, an open-face sandwich made with French bread, sautéed mushrooms, cheese, and ketchup, is a popular street food. This sandwich is also called Polish pizza and today is made with a variety of toppings such as feta cheese, Greek olives, bacon, sausage, and pineapple. This dish originated during the communist era when food was scarce.<sup>42, 43</sup>

## Dress Code

Poles wear Western-style clothing and dress conservatively. In a business setting, work attire tends to be formal. Dark-colored suits are appropriate for men. Women have more choices, from business suits to dresses, skirts, elegant blouses, blazers, and cardigans. Women usually dress modestly and preferably not in trousers. Both genders are expected to be well-groomed. Women may wear high heels and makeup. Some companies require women to wear tights year-round.<sup>44, 45</sup>

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

Exchange 7

Because clothing is expensive in Poland, it is common for people to pay attention to the quality of garments and wardrobes. In general, simplicity is valued; neutral colors and classic shapes are expected. Men wear watches to give themselves an individual touch; for women, discrete jewelry achieves the same effect. Business casual is accepted in smaller companies, where men do not have to wear ties and may even wear polo shirts with elegant trousers.<sup>46</sup>

38 Jonny Blair, "11 Traditional Polish Dishes that Will Remind All Poles of Home," Culture Trip, 20 March 2018, <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/poland/articles/11-traditional-polish-dishes-that-will-remind-all-poles-of-home/>

39 Food in Every Country, "Poland," n.d., <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Kazakhstan-to-South-Africa/Poland.html>

40 Victoria Bak, "21 Polish Foods You Need to Try that Aren't Pierogi," Spoon University, n.d., <https://spoonuniversity.com/lifestyle/polish-foods-that-arent-pierogi>

41 A Family Feast, "Polish Babka," n.d., <https://www.afamilyfeast.com/polish-babka/>

42 Taste Atlas, "Zapiekanka," n.d., <https://www.tasteatlas.com/zapiekanka/recipe>

43 Barbara Rolek, "Polish Open-Faced Sandwich (Zapiekanka)," The Spruce Eats, 6 July 2019, <https://www.thespruceeats.com/polish-open-faced-sandwich-zapiekanka-recipe-1137059>

44 Santander, "Poland: Business Practices," n.d., <https://santandertrade.com/en/portal/establish-overseas/poland/business-practices>

45 Ewelina Nurczyk, "Dress to Impress? Business Dress Code in Poland," Career in Poland, 1 June 2016, <https://www.careersinpoland.com/article/work/dress-to-impress-business-dress-code-in-poland>

46 Ewelina Nurczyk, "Dress to Impress? Business Dress Code in Poland," Career in Poland, 1 June 2016, <https://www.careersinpoland.com/article/work/dress-to-impress-business-dress-code-in-poland>

## Non-Religious Celebrations

### *New Year's Day*

New Year's Eve is known as Sylwester because it falls on the feast day of St. Sylvester. Poles celebrate with large quantities of food, alcohol, and fireworks. New Year's Day (Nowy Rok) festivities include gathering around the bonfire and consuming sausages, meat, *bigos*, and vodka. Bread and rolls in the shape of rabbits, sheep, geese, and cows are eaten to ensure wealth and good luck for the coming year. Round loaves of bread symbolize life coming full circle and eternity. A popular New Year's Day dessert is *paczki* (doughnuts). New Year's Day is also the start of Carnival season, the period before Lent, and the time to settle old debts.<sup>47, 48</sup>

### *Labor Day—1 May*

This holiday, along with International Workers' Day, was celebrated in Poland with the endorsement of the Soviet Union during the communist era. Celebrations often included large military parades. This is a bank holiday in Poland.<sup>49</sup>

### *Constitution Day—3 May*

This holiday is known as Święto Trzeciego Maja, which means National Third of May Day. Constitution Day marks the declaration and adoption of Poland's first constitution on 3 May 1791.<sup>50</sup> The day is celebrated with military parades, concerts, and family picnics. Many people also gather at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Constitution Day is an official public holiday.<sup>51</sup>

### *Polish Army Day—15 August*

Army Day commemorates the Battle of Warsaw, which was fought on 12–25 August 1920, during the war between the Poles and the Bolsheviks. This battle reaffirmed Poland's independence and blocked a Russian invasion into Europe. The holiday falls on the same day as Assumption Day.<sup>52</sup>

Poland celebrates the day with military parades in Warsaw.<sup>53</sup> In 2019, observances of Army Day took place in Katowice with a large military parade of vehicles, troops, and aircraft that flew over the city.<sup>54</sup>

### *Independence Day—11 November*

Independence Day commemorates the re-establishment of the state of Poland at the end of World War I in 1918. For 123 years before 1918, Poland was partitioned under the rule of Prussia, Austria, and Russia. On 11 November 1918, the day the war officially ended, Poland was granted its independence. The holiday was abolished in 1945 when Poland became a communist country. After 1989, Independence Day was reinstated as a national holiday.<sup>55</sup>

47 Barbara Rolek, "How Eastern Europeans Celebrate New Year's," Spruce Eats, 2 October 2019, <https://www.thespruceeats.com/how-eastern-europeans-celebrate-new-years-1136792#polish-new-year-traditions>

48 Ewelina Nurczyk, "5 Things Polish People Do on New Year's Eve," Career in Poland, 28 December 2015, <https://www.careersinpoland.com/article/customs/5-things-polish-people-do-on-new-years-eve>

49 Office Holidays, "Labour Day in Poland 2020," n.d., <https://www.officeholidays.com/holidays/poland/labour-day>

50 Office Holidays, "Constitution Day in Poland in 2020," n.d., <https://www.officeholidays.com/holidays/poland/poland-constitution-day>

51 Time and Date, "Constitution Day in Poland," n.d., <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/poland/constitution-day>

52 Time and Date, "Assumption of Mary in Poland," n.d., <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/poland/assumption-of-mary>

53 Voice of America, "Poland Marks Army Day with Parade, Call for US Military Base," 15 August 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/poland-marks-army-day-parade-call-us-military-base>

54 Poland In, "Armed Forces Day: Katowice Hosts Grand Military Parade," 15 August 2019, <https://polandin.com/43950898/armed-forces-day-katowice-hosts-grand-military-parade>

55 Office Holidays, "Independence Day in Poland in 2020," n.d., <https://www.officeholidays.com/holidays/poland/poland-independence-day>

Celebrations include firework displays, concerts, parades, and family reunions. Since Independence Day is an official public holiday, schools, banks, government offices, and most private businesses are closed. Public transit may have a different schedule.<sup>56</sup>

## Dos and Don'ts<sup>57</sup>

### *Do*

- Carry your passport or ID card at all times.
- Ask if you have to take off your shoes before going inside a house.
- Tip 10% in restaurants and bars, and 15% for excellent service.
- Be punctual; provide notice if you are going to be late.
- Bring a gift to a host.
- Be cautious when discussing World War II, politics, and the economy.

### *Don't*

- Do not swear in public.
- Do not refer to Poland as part of Eastern Europe.
- Do not give even numbers of flowers; even numbers are meant only for funerals.
- Do not turn down local food when offered.
- Do not party after 10 p.m. or be intoxicated in public.
- Do not jaywalk.
- Do not be overly enthusiastic and complimentary of Ukrainians or Russians.
- Do not assume all Poles are Catholics.
- Do not speak critically of religious institutions or faith.
- Do not assume that all Poles hate communism and communists.

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56 Office Holidays, "Independence Day in Poland in 2020," n.d., <https://www.officeholidays.com/holidays/poland/poland-independence-day>

57 Cultural Atlas, "Polish Culture," n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-etiquette>

# Polish Cultural Orientation

## Chapter 3 | Traditions, Assessment

Read the following statements and answer True or False

1. Served between 8 and 9 p.m., dinner (*kolacja*) is the most important meal of the day.  True  False
2. Poland did not celebrate Independence Day during the communist era.  True  False
3. When visiting a Polish home, it is polite to bring a bouquet of even-numbered roses.  True  False
4. *Zapiekanka* is the Polish version of pizza.  True  False
5. Polish Army Day commemorates the end of World War II and the defeat of Nazi Germany.  True  False

# Polish Cultural Orientation

## Chapter 3 | Traditions, Assessment Answers

1. False:  
Lunch (*obiad*) is the most important meal of the day. It consists of several courses and is served between 2–3 p.m. or at home between 4–5:30 pm.
2. True:  
The holiday was abolished after World War II, when Poland became a communist country. After the collapse of the communist regime in 1989, Independence Day was reinstated as a national holiday celebrated on 11 November.
3. False:  
Red or white flowers, especially roses, are reserved for lovers, carnations are a symbol of the labor movement, and chrysanthemums are used in funerals. Flowers should come in odd numbers and in any color but red or white.
4. True:  
*Zapiekanka*, a famous Polish street food, is an open-face sandwich made with French bread, sautéed mushrooms, cheese, and ketchup. It is also called Polish pizza.
5. False:  
Army Day commemorates the Battle of Warsaw, fought from 12–25 August 1920 during the war between the Poles and the Bolsheviks. This battle reaffirmed Poland's independence and blocked a Russian incursion into Europe.



## Chapter 4 | Urban Life



Szeroka Street in Toruń.  
Wikimedia / Piotr Koźurno

### Introduction

Poland's population began to urbanize in the 1940s, particularly after World War II, when reconstruction and bolstering the national infrastructure was critical. The communist government's push to industrialize the country and nationalize the economy encouraged migration to the cities. A modern working class formed in urban areas to sustain industrial job growth. Cities grew rapidly. By the late 1970s, nearly two-thirds of the population was urban.<sup>1</sup> The rural-to-urban movement stabilized, and today approximately 60% of Poles live in cities, well below the overall European ratio of 74%.<sup>2, 3</sup>

Polish urban dwellers face challenges and enjoy advantages similar to their counterparts across Europe. They must deal with high levels of pollution and haphazard development but benefit from a vibrant cultural scene, a

1 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>

2 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>

3 Statista, "Degree of Urbanization (Percentage of Urban Population in Total Population) by Continent in 2019," 20 September 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/270860/urbanization-by-continent/>

thriving consumer culture, and well-developed public transport. Poland's urban schools produce remarkable educational outcomes while its healthcare system requires reform and investment.<sup>4, 5, 6</sup>

## Urban Challenges

### Pollution

Poland has the fourth-highest rates of death from air pollution among European countries, amounting to some 50,000 deaths per year. Thirty-three of the 50 most polluted cities in the European Union are in Poland. Kraków, its world-famous medieval architecture and status as a tourist destination notwithstanding, is among the worst offenders. Breathing the city's polluted air for a year is equivalent to smoking 3,000 cigarettes. Many residents have become accustomed to wearing masks and checking air pollution levels daily. On high-pollution days, children do not go outside for recess and the elderly are advised to stay home.<sup>7, 8, 9</sup>

About a quarter of Poland's air pollution is produced by the industry and energy sectors. Poland produces around 86% of the European Union's coal and nearly all of the country's electricity is produced by antiquated coal-fired plants. There are several reasons for Poland's continued reliance on coal, including the many jobs sustained by the coal industry and Poland's unease about being dependent on Russian natural gas, the primary alternative to coal. Transport emissions are responsible for another 10% of air pollution.<sup>10, 11, 12</sup>

By far the biggest source of air pollution in Poland, accounting for more than half of particulate matter emissions, is home heating. Over two-thirds of Poland's homes are heated by old, inefficient stoves. Residents fill their stoves with the cheapest and most easily available fuels, including low quality, highly polluting coal and the contents from trash bins like plastic and rubber.<sup>13, 14, 15</sup>

Poland has attempted to deal with air pollution in various ways. Kraków has implemented incentives for residents to switch to central heating and has considered fines for those who continue to use highly polluting stoves. In other cities, police are tasked with identifying residents who burn trash in their stoves. The national government

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- 4 Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Poland: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992), <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>
  - 5 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
  - 6 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
  - 7 Feargus O'Sullivan, "Choked by Air Pollution, Krakow Bans Coal From Homes," City Lab, 12 September 2019, <https://www.citylab.com/environment/2019/09/krakow-poland-pollution-air-quality-coal-wood-burning-law/597352/>
  - 8 France24, "Smog Chokes Coal-Dependent Poland with No End in Sight," 31 March 2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20190331-smog-chokes-coal-dependent-poland-with-no-end-sight>
  - 9 Irene Banos Ruiz, "Where is Europe's Air Safe to Breathe?" *Deutsche Welle*, 9 November 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/where-is-europes-air-safe-to-breathe/a-46189571>
  - 10 Feargus O'Sullivan, "Choked by Air Pollution, Krakow Bans Coal from Homes," City Lab, 12 September 2019, <https://www.citylab.com/environment/2019/09/krakow-poland-pollution-air-quality-coal-wood-burning-law/597352/>
  - 11 France24, "Smog Chokes Coal-Dependent Poland with No End in Sight," 31 March 2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20190331-smog-chokes-coal-dependent-poland-with-no-end-sight>
  - 12 Irene Banos Ruiz, "Where is Europe's Air Safe to Breathe?" *Deutsche Welle*, 9 November 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/where-is-europes-air-safe-to-breathe/a-46189571>
  - 13 Feargus O'Sullivan, "Choked by Air Pollution, Krakow Bans Coal from Homes," City Lab, 12 September 2019, <https://www.citylab.com/environment/2019/09/krakow-poland-pollution-air-quality-coal-wood-burning-law/597352/>
  - 14 France24, "Smog Chokes Coal-Dependent Poland with No End in Sight," 31 March 2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20190331-smog-chokes-coal-dependent-poland-with-no-end-sight>
  - 15 Irene Banos Ruiz, "Where is Europe's Air Safe to Breathe?" *Deutsche Welle*, 9 November 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/where-is-europes-air-safe-to-breathe/a-46189571>

has introduced a USD 26.8 billion program to help citizens acquire cleaner, more energy efficient home heaters. Nearly 70% of Poles support a proposal to eliminate the use of coal by 2030.<sup>16, 17, 18, 19</sup>

## Urban Development

Poland's urban development is marked by a lack of coordination and integration among national, regional, and local planning authorities. While Poland's economic boom is fueling population growth primarily in suburban areas, only 30% of municipal territory is subjected to proper urban planning. Decisions about new buildings and infrastructure are often not subject to regulatory tools, cross-jurisdictional coordination, or public consultation. Rather, development takes place on an ad-hoc manner.<sup>20, 21, 22, 23</sup>

The lack of coordinated planning has led to urban sprawl. People have built houses along existing major roads, leading to congestion, while other suitable spaces have remained undeveloped. The chaotic development pattern has reduced the availability of public spaces, made it difficult to develop supporting transport infrastructure, and reduced the economic development potential of new urban areas.<sup>24, 25, 26, 27</sup>

## Urban Living Conditions

Most of Poland's urban dwellers live on the outskirts of cities in communist-era, functionally styled apartment blocks. Those who can afford to pay more live in single-family houses and apartments built during a 1990s construction boom. A typical apartment in Poland is usually very small, with limited areas for play and recreation. Aside from a bathroom and kitchen, there may be only two or three rooms for living space. It is common for residents' workplaces to be located a distance from their apartments or homes. Residents typically commute using mass transportation, which is cheaper than maintaining automobiles.<sup>28, 29</sup>

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- 16 Feargus O'Sullivan, "Choked by Air Pollution, Krakow Bans Coal from Homes," City Lab, 12 September 2019, <https://www.citylab.com/environment/2019/09/krakow-poland-pollution-air-quality-coal-wood-burning-law/597352/>
- 17 France24, "Smog Chokes Coal-Dependent Poland with No End in Sight," 31 March 2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20190331-smog-chokes-coal-dependent-poland-with-no-end-sight>
- 18 Irene Banos Ruiz, "Where is Europe's Air Safe to Breathe?" *Deutsche Welle*, 9 November 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/where-is-europes-air-safe-to-breathe/a-46189571>
- 19 Jonathan Watts, "Can Poland Wean Itself off Coal?" *Guardian*, 14 December 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/14/poland-wean-coal-climate>
- 20 OECD, "OECD Urban Policy Reviews: Poland," 16 May 2011, <https://www.oecd.org/poland/oecdurbanpolicyreviewspoland.htm>
- 21 URBACT, "URBACT in Poland," 13 August 2018, <https://urbact.eu/poland>
- 22 Marcel Ionescu-Heroiu and Grzegorz Aleksander Wolszczak, "A Tale of Three Friends: Urban Planning and Why It Matters for Polish Development," World Bank Blogs, 24 January 2019, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/europeandcentralasia/tale-three-friends-urban-planning-and-why-it-matters-polish-development>
- 23 Marcel Ionescu-Heroiu et al., "Poland Catching-Up Regions 2," World Bank, 2018, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/403871528788411320/pdf/Polkarpackie-and-wi-tokrzyskie-Towards-More-Efficient-Spatial-Planning.pdf>
- 24 OECD, "OECD Urban Policy Reviews: Poland," 16 May 2011, <https://www.oecd.org/poland/oecdurbanpolicyreviewspoland.htm>
- 25 URBACT, "URBACT in Poland," 13 August 2018, <https://urbact.eu/poland>
- 26 Marcel Ionescu-Heroiu and Grzegorz Aleksander Wolszczak, "A Tale of Three Friends: Urban Planning and Why It Matters for Polish Development," World Bank Blogs, 24 January 2019, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/europeandcentralasia/tale-three-friends-urban-planning-and-why-it-matters-polish-development>
- 27 Marcel Ionescu-Heroiu et al., "Poland Catching-Up Regions 2," World Bank, 2018, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/403871528788411320/pdf/Polkarpackie-and-wi-tokrzyskie-Towards-More-Efficient-Spatial-Planning.pdf>
- 28 Countries and Their Cultures, "Poland," n.d., <https://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Poland.html>
- 29 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

## Re-privatization in Warsaw

In the post-communist era, Warsaw has been the scene of a lengthy process of “re-privatization” of properties. After World War II, as Warsaw lay in ruins, the communist regime seized ownership of all city land in order to facilitate rebuilding. The new city that emerged, with large public spaces and numerous social housing apartment blocks, was very different from pre-war Warsaw.<sup>30, 31</sup>

After 1989, former property owners or their heirs began submitting claims to regain their expropriated real estate. Other former owners sold their claims to developers. Between 1990 and 2018, some 4,000 re-privatization decisions were made. The results ranged from the tragic to the surreal. Many city-owned buildings, housing some 17,000 residents, often in rent-controlled apartments, were reprivatized. Many of the new owners drastically increased rents or made life unbearable for their tenants in efforts to get them to leave. Some people were simply permanently locked out of their apartments. Other reprivatized plots were in the middle of parks or playgrounds, and the new owners put up shabby temporary structures or erected concrete walls around their properties.<sup>32, 33</sup>

## Healthcare

Poland has a universal health insurance system that covers Poles and other EU nationals who are in Poland. Coverage extends to the children of insured persons until the age of 18, or 26 if the child continues to be a student, as well as spouses and other relatives who are part of the household. The vast majority of healthcare facilities in the country are providers for the health insurance program.<sup>34</sup>

### Is there a hospital nearby?

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

*Exchange 8*

Health benefits are provided generally free of charge. Medical devices such as prosthetics and wheelchairs may require partial payment. Medicines, such as prescription drugs, are usually provided free of charge to patients. Insured persons contribute 9% of their gross income to the program. Emergency care is free of charge, including for those without health insurance. The nationwide emergency phone number is 112.<sup>35, 36</sup>

Private healthcare providers supplement the public system. Private hospitals and other facilities are funded through private insurance schemes. Private providers are most prevalent in the more economically developed

30 James Shotter and Evon Huber, “Poland’s Reclaimed Properties Create Scars across Warsaw,” *Financial Times*, 24 April 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/3f1f6972-430c-11e8-93cf-67ac3a6482fd>

31 Christian Davies, “‘They Stole the Soul of the City’: How Warsaw’s Reprivatisation Is Causing Chaos,” *Guardian*, 18 December 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/dec/18/stole-city-soul-warsaw-reprivatisation-chaos>

32 James Shotter and Evon Huber, “Poland’s Reclaimed Properties Create Scars across Warsaw,” *Financial Times*, 24 April 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/3f1f6972-430c-11e8-93cf-67ac3a6482fd>

33 Christian Davies, “‘They Stole the Soul of the City’: How Warsaw’s Reprivatisation Is Causing Chaos,” *Guardian*, 18 December 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/dec/18/stole-city-soul-warsaw-reprivatisation-chaos>

34 EURES, The European Job Mobility Portal, “Living and Working Conditions, Poland, Healthcare Services,” March 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=8778&acro=living&lang=en&parentId=7824&countryId=PL&living>

35 EURES, The European Job Mobility Portal, “Living and Working Conditions, Poland, Healthcare Services,” March 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=8778&acro=living&lang=en&parentId=7824&countryId=PL&living>

36 International Student Insurance, “Poland Student Insurance,” n.d., <https://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/poland-student-insurance/healthcare-in-poland.php>

regions of the country. Private hospitals tend to be newer and better maintained than public ones. Poland has the highest rate of private healthcare use among EU countries.<sup>37, 38</sup>

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

*Exchange 9*

Poland's public healthcare system is beset by shortcomings and deficiencies. Many resident doctors work double the hours of a regular full-time job and report being extremely fatigued and unable to focus on patients. Salaries for resident doctors are low, the equivalent of USD 694–833 per month. It is estimated that each year approximately a quarter of medical students leave Poland, often in search of better work opportunities in Western Europe. Some 20,000 nurses have left since 2004. Poland has a ratio of 2.4 doctors per 1,000 patients, the lowest in the European Union. This situation has led to severe understaffing in hospitals and the closing of some hospital wings. Doctors also complain about a lack of basic supplies and new medical technology. Many public hospital buildings date back to the mid-20th century and are in poor condition and require costly maintenance.<sup>39, 40, 41, 42</sup>

For Polish patients, wait times to see a doctor can be as long as four months. To meet with specialists in fields like endocrinology and orthopedics the average wait time is one year.<sup>43, 44</sup>

Despite its ostensible concern for social welfare, the PiS-led government has done little to improve Poland's healthcare system. Statistics vary, but according to several sources Poland spent 4.5% of GDP on healthcare in 2017, well below the EU average of 7.5%. When doctors went on a hunger strike in 2017 to demand an increase in healthcare expenditures, the government reacted by attempting to discredit the protesters through false reporting in state media. The government plans to increase healthcare spending to 6% of GDP by 2024.<sup>45, 46</sup>

Poland is making some technological improvements to its healthcare system. In 2019, electronic prescription, referral, and dismissal services were introduced, with positive reception by patients. Video consultations and

37 International Student Insurance, "Poland Student Insurance," n.d., <https://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/poland-student-insurance/healthcare-in-poland.php>

38 HealthManagement.org, "Overview of the Polish Healthcare System," 2011, <https://healthmanagement.org/c/hospital/issuearticle/overview-of-the-polish-healthcare-system>

39 Claudia Ciobanu, "Polish Doctors say Government's Healthcare Commitment a 'Sham,'" Balkan Insight, 17 June 2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/06/17/polish-doctors-say-governments-healthcare-commitment-a-sham/>

40 Claudia Ciobanu, "Poland's Coronavirus Fight Exposes Healthcare Weaknesses," Balkan Insight, 16 March 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/03/16/polands-coronavirus-fight-exposes-healthcare-weaknesses/>

41 HealthManagement.org, "Overview of the Polish Healthcare System," 2011, <https://healthmanagement.org/c/hospital/issuearticle/overview-of-the-polish-healthcare-system>

42 Poland In, "Medical Spending to Increase to 6 Percent of GDP by 2024," 27 June 2018, <https://polandin.com/37840641/medical-spending-to-increase-to-6-percent-of-gdp-by-2024>

43 Claudia Ciobanu, "Polish Doctors say Government's Healthcare Commitment a 'Sham,'" Balkan Insight, 17 June 2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/06/17/polish-doctors-say-governments-healthcare-commitment-a-sham/>

44 International Student Insurance, "Poland Student Insurance," n.d., <https://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/poland-student-insurance/healthcare-in-poland.php>

45 Claudia Ciobanu, "Polish Doctors say Government's Healthcare Commitment a 'Sham,'" Balkan Insight, 17 June 2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/06/17/polish-doctors-say-governments-healthcare-commitment-a-sham/>

46 Poland In, "Medical Spending to Increase to 6 Percent of GDP by 2024," 27 June 2018, <https://polandin.com/37840641/medical-spending-to-increase-to-6-percent-of-gdp-by-2024>

other telemedicine techniques are starting to be used. Electronic medical records have been partially introduced, with full implementation planned by 2021.<sup>47</sup>

## Urban Education

Poland's education system provides free and compulsory schooling from ages 6–18. The school system starts with one year of preschool, or nursery (*przedszkole*), which stimulates skills for mathematics and reading. Primary school (*szkoła podstawowa*) lasts for eight grades. After completing grades 1–3 with a single teacher, students move on to systematic learning in subjects like Polish language, mathematics, art, and physical education in grades 4–8. After eighth grade, students take an internationally standardized competence test.<sup>48, 49, 50, 51</sup>

Secondary education, the equivalent of high school, takes several forms and can last between three and five years. Technical schools (*technikum*) and basic vocational schools (*zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa*) prepare students for occupations and trades, such as accountant, mechanic, or baker. General secondary schools (*liceum*) prepare students for attending college. Most secondary students complete their secondary schooling by taking the matriculation exam (*matura*), which is necessary for moving on to higher education.<sup>52, 53, 54, 55</sup>

Tertiary, or higher, education includes several programs that lead to bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. There are public and private higher-learning institutions, including universities and institutions with specializations like military education, government service, or the arts. The academic year lasts from October to June and is divided into winter and summer semesters. Students can choose between full-time and part-time programs. Polish college degrees are internationally recognized.<sup>56, 57, 58</sup>

Poland is renowned for its institutions of higher learning. Jagiellonian University in Kraków, founded in 1364, is one of Europe's oldest. The Polish Academy of Sciences has branches in other countries and is known for its research institutes. The Catholic University of Lublin was the sole private university in the entire Soviet bloc between 1945 and 1989.<sup>59, 60</sup>

- 47 Nick Westerby, "Poland's Healthcare System Is Going Through a Revolution," First News, 4 October 2019, <https://www.thefirstnews.com/article/polands-healthcare-system-is-going-through-a-revolution-7928>
- 48 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 49 Scholaro Pro, "Education System in Poland," 2018, <https://www.scholaro.com/pro/countries/poland/education-system>
- 50 European Commission, EACEA National Policies Platform, Eurydice, "Poland: Organisation of the Education System and of Its Structure," 20 December 2019, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure-56\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure-56_en)
- 51 K12 Academics, "Education in Poland," 2 December 2017, <https://www.k12academics.com/Education%20Worldwide/education-poland>
- 52 European Commission, EACEA National Policies Platform, Eurydice, "Poland: Organisation of the Education System and of Its Structure," 20 December 2019, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure-56\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure-56_en)
- 53 K12 Academics, "Education in Poland," 2 December 2017, <https://www.k12academics.com/Education%20Worldwide/education-poland>
- 54 Scholaro Pro, "Education System in Poland," 2018, <https://www.scholaro.com/pro/countries/poland/education-system>
- 55 Statistics Poland, "Number of persons who took or passed matriculation exam," 10 May 2019, <https://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/education/education/number-of-persons-who-took-or-passed-matriculation-exam,5,1.html?pdf=1>
- 56 European Commission, EACEA National Policies Platform, Eurydice, "Poland: Organisation of the Education System and of Its Structure," 20 December 2019, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure-56\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure-56_en)
- 57 Educations.com, "The Higher Education System in Poland," 2 January 2020, <https://www.educations.com/study-guides/europe/study-in-poland/education-system-4315>
- 58 K12 Academics, "Education in Poland," 2 December 2017, <https://www.k12academics.com/Education%20Worldwide/education-poland>
- 59 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 60 K12 Academics, "Education in Poland," 2 December 2017, <https://www.k12academics.com/Education%20Worldwide/education-poland>

Poland has achieved near-universal literacy, at 99.8%. In 2016, education expenditures amounted to 4.6% of GDP. The world's first national ministry of education was established in Poland in 1773.<sup>61, 62</sup>

## Restaurants

A restaurant (*restauracja*) in Poland refers to any location with table service, from affordable eateries to sidewalk cafes to fine dining establishments. Dining is typically simple and straightforward, with choose-your-own seating and orders taken at the counter. At informal restaurants, diners sometimes share the same table. Special accommodations for children, like high chairs, are often not available. Since Poles traditionally eat breakfast at home, most restaurants do not open until after 9 a.m. The country's most prominent dining destinations are Warsaw, Kraków, and Gdańsk. Wierzynek, in Kraków, is the country's oldest restaurant.<sup>63, 64, 65, 66</sup>

### I would like coffee or tea.

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

Exchange 10

Most restaurant meals include several courses. Menus are fairly standard from location to location. Menu sections include hors d'oeuvres (*zakąski*), soups (*zupy*), main courses (*dania drugie* or *potrawy*), side dishes (*dodatki*), desserts (*desery*), and drinks (*napoje*). The main courses are subdivided into meat (*dania mięsne*), fish (*dania rybne*), poultry (*dania z drobiu*), and vegetarian dishes (*dania jarskie*). Prices usually accompany the names of menu items, but the prices of main courses do not include side dishes. The price for fish is often per 100 g (3.5 oz) instead of per serving.<sup>67, 68</sup>

### I'd like some hot soup.

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

Exchange 11

The most popular toast among Poles is *na zdrowie* (to your health). Another common toast is *stola* (one hundred years), expressing hope for longevity. Even when dining with business associates, meals are usually not the time for making business decisions. The host usually pays the bill, often over guests' objections and efforts to contribute. The common tip amount is 10%.<sup>69, 70</sup>

61 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 Feb 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>

62 K12 Academics, "Education in Poland," 2 December 2017, <https://www.k12academics.com/Education%20Worldwide/education-poland>

63 Lonely Planet, "Poland in Detail: Eating," 2017, <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/poland/in-location/eating/a/nar/143c03aa-5347-4fff-83ab-9f90c2248b37/360265>

64 iExplore, "Poland—Food and Restaurants," n.d., <https://www.iexplore.com/articles/travel-guides/europe/poland/food-and-restaurants>

65 Sage Dining Service, "International Cuisine: Poland," 6 February 2018, <https://www.sagedining.com/blog/post/130201/international-cuisine-poland>

66 Etiquette Scholar, "Polish Dining Etiquette," 2019, [https://www.etiquettescholar.com/dining\\_etiquette/table-etiquette/europe-e-dinner\\_etiquette/polish.html](https://www.etiquettescholar.com/dining_etiquette/table-etiquette/europe-e-dinner_etiquette/polish.html)

67 Lonely Planet, "Poland in Detail: Eating," 2017, <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/poland/in-location/eating/a/nar/143c03aa-5347-4fff-83ab-9f90c2248b37/360265>

68 iExplore, "Poland—Food and Restaurants," n.d., <https://www.iexplore.com/articles/travel-guides/europe/poland/food-and-restaurants>

69 Lonely Planet, "Poland in Detail: Eating," 2017, <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/poland/in-location/eating/a/nar/143c03aa-5347-4fff-83ab-9f90c2248b37/360265>

70 Etiquette Scholar, "Polish Dining Etiquette," 2019, [https://www.etiquettescholar.com/dining\\_etiquette/table-etiquette/europe-e-dinner\\_etiquette/polish.html](https://www.etiquettescholar.com/dining_etiquette/table-etiquette/europe-e-dinner_etiquette/polish.html)

Lunch culture is becoming more evident in big cities due to foreign influence. When Poles invite foreigners to a restaurant it will usually be for midday lunch or dinner.<sup>71</sup> Although a smoking ban went into effect in 2010, smoking in bars and restaurants is still permitted in ventilated spaces that are separated and enclosed. In practice, many establishments provide a larger space for their smoking patrons and a smaller enclosed space for nonsmokers.<sup>72</sup>

**May I have a glass of water?**

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

Exchange 12

Milk bars (bar mleczny) are low-cost, no-frills eateries found throughout Poland. The first milk bar was opened in Warsaw in 1896 by a dairy farmer, who named it for the large number of dairy items that were offered on the menu. These establishments functioned as cafeterias and served a wide range of traditional homemade soups, sausages, dumplings, and cakes. The bars flourished during the communist era when eating inexpensive, government-subsidized food was the norm. Today’s milk bars are snapshots of old-fashioned Polish life and are almost always self-service.<sup>73, 74</sup>

## Marketplaces and Street Vendors

Poland’s cities are replete with moderns shopping malls as well as traditional outdoor bazaars. Bazaars typically carry craft goods such as woodcarvings, handwoven rugs, enamelware, and handmade jewelry embellished with silver and amber. Amber 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.<sup>75, 76</sup> Most stores are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Supermarkets and large shopping centers stay open until 10 p.m. Retail stores are closed on most Sundays.<sup>77, 78</sup>

**Do you accept U.S. currency?**

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

Exchange 13

St. Dominic’s Fair in Gdańsk is the oldest and most famous commercial and cultural festival in Poland, dating back to 1260. Every summer in July and August, vendors set up stalls throughout the city center for about three weeks. A wide array of crafts and souvenirs is on offer, including sculptures, designs made of cloth, old books

71 Marek Kępa and Magdalena Kasprzyk-Chevriaux, “A Typical Daily Menu in Poland,” Culture.pl, n.d., <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-typical-daily-menu-in-poland>

72 In Your Pocket, “Smoking in Poland,” n.d., [https://www.inyourpocket.com/warsaw/Smoking\\_72660f](https://www.inyourpocket.com/warsaw/Smoking_72660f)

73 Helen Boast, “Your First Stop in Poland Should Be a Milk Bar (Not That Milk Bar),” Eater, 15 February 2019, <https://www.eater.com/2019/2/15/18165327/milk-bar-poland-warsaw-pierogi-potato-pancake-travel-nostalgia>

74 Joseph Francis, “What to Expect from Your First Visit to a Polish Milk Bar,” Culture Trip, 28 March 2017, <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/poland/articles/what-to-expect-from-your-first-visit-to-a-polish-milk-bar/>

75 World Travel Guide, “Poland Shopping and Nightlife,” n.d., <https://www.worldtravelguide.net/guides/europe/poland/shopping-nightlife/>

76 Go for Poland, “Shopping,” n.d., <http://goforpoland.pl/en/themes/shopping.html>

77 Orange Smile, “Shopping in Poland—Outlets, Shopping Streets and Boutiques,” n.d., <http://www.orangesmile.com/travelguide/poland/shopping.htm>

78 Marc Santora and Joanna Berendt, “Mixing Politics and Piety, a Conservative Priest Seeks to Shape Poland’s Future,” *New York Times*, 21 September 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/21/world/europe/poland-elections-tadeusz-rydzyk.html>



and antiques, and jewelry made of gold, silver, coral, and amber. Alongside the vendors, visitors enjoy street performers, theater events, parades, and concerts. The event attracts millions of visitors every year.<sup>79, 80, 81</sup>

The official currency of Poland is the zloty (PLN). As of March 2020, USD 1 was worth PLN 4.13.82 The PLN is subdivided into 100 groszy.<sup>83</sup> PLN banknotes come in denominations of 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500. Poland does not officially use the euro, but the EU currency may be accepted at airports, hotels, and hypermarkets. It is recommended to let cashiers know ahead of time if paying in euros.<sup>84</sup>

Travelers can exchange foreign currency at banks and change bureaus known as *kantors*, found in department stores, train stations, post offices, travel agencies, and hotels. While cash remains a popular payment method, major credit cards are becoming widely accepted, especially at hotels, restaurants, gas stations, and large stores. ATMs, known in Poland as *bankomats*, are found throughout the country.<sup>85, 86</sup>

## Urban Traffic and Transportation

Most of Poland's public transport services operate in urban areas. Some 260 large and medium cities have public transport systems, accounting for 80% of the country's passengers. Public transport is generally viewed favorably, especially for its widespread availability and low fares. Services usually operate from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m., with reduced hours on weekends.<sup>87, 88, 89</sup>

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

Exchange 14

Buses (autobus) are by far the most popular and widely used form of public transport. Bus ticket costs depend on the duration of the ride. Paperless tickets can be bought at machines inside buses (automat biletów), while paper tickets are available at bus stops and newspaper kiosks. Plainclothes ticket controllers routinely check passengers' tickets, especially in large city centers. Fare systems differ from city to city, and a ticket purchased in one city cannot be used in another. Buses can get crowded during rush hour. Poland's urban bus fleet consists

79 I Love Poland, "St Dominic's Fair in Gdansk," 2016, <https://www.ilovepoland.net/travel-related-news-in-poland/st-dominics-fair-in-gdansk/>

80 Polish Tourism Organization, "St Dominic Fair in Gdansk," n.d., <https://www.poland.travel/en/culture-entertainment/st-dominic-fair-in-gdansk>

81 Gdańsk, "St. Dominic's Fair," 27 July 2019, [https://www.inyourpocket.com/gdansk/st-dominics-fair\\_15033e](https://www.inyourpocket.com/gdansk/st-dominics-fair_15033e)

82 XE, "PLN—Polish Zloty," n.d., <https://www.xe.com/currency/pln-polish-zloty>

83 Krakow Info, "Money That Is Good to Have in Krakow," n.d., <http://www.krakow-info.com/money.htm>

84 Poland Tours, "Poland Money—Does Poland Use the Euro Currency?" n.d., <https://tourspoland.com/blog/does-poland-use-the-euro>

85 Lonely Planet, "Poland: Money and Costs," n.d., <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/poland/practical-information/money-costs>

86 DiscoverCracow, "Poland's Currency—The Ultimate Guide when Travelling to Krakow," 8 October 2018, <https://discovercracow.com/polands-currency/>

87 Adam Karolak, "Public Transport in Poland—The Reality and Prospects," Intelligent Transport, 25 February 2016, <https://www.intelligenttransport.com/transport-articles/18367/public-transport-in-poland-2/>

88 Lonely Planet, "Poland: Local Transport," n.d., <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/poland/transport/getting-around/local-transport>

89 Phil Sylvester, "Transport Options in Poland: How to Get Around," World Nomads, 4 December 2019, <https://www.worldnomads.com/explore/eastern-europe/poland/public-transport-safety-in-poland>

of 11,500 buses. Tram (tramwaj) and trolleybus (trolejbus) systems are less extensive and found in fewer cities but operate similarly to buses. Warsaw is the only city with a metro.<sup>90, 91, 92, 93</sup>

### Is there a gas station nearby?

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

Exchange 15

Taxis are inexpensive and widely available. Prices are higher at night, on Sundays, and in areas far from city centers. Some illegitimate or unregulated cabs, called mafia taxis by locals, operate in urban areas. Ordering a taxi is best done by phone from verified operators.<sup>94, 95</sup> Rideshare services are becoming increasingly common.<sup>96</sup>

### 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

Exchange 16

Trains are a primary means of traveling between cities. A variety of services is available, from comfortable high-speed trains that connect only major cities to slower regional trains that stop at every station. Most trains offer first- and second-class accommodations. Longer routes offer dining and sleeping cars. Many train stations in major cities have been renovated and modernized while others are housed in historic buildings. Some are attached to major shopping centers.<sup>97, 98, 99</sup>

Poland's major airports in Warsaw, Kraków, Gdańsk, Katowice, Szczecin, Poznań, Bydgoszcz, Łódź, and Wrocław offer international and domestic flights. The main hub is Warsaw's Chopin Airport, which connects Poland to the rest of Europe, North America, and the rest of the world. In 2017 the airport processed over 15.5 million passengers. LOT Polish Airlines is the national carrier.<sup>100, 101</sup>

- 90 iExplore, "Poland—Transportation," n.d., <https://www.iexplore.com/articles/travel-guides/europe/poland/transportation>
- 91 Lonely Planet, "Poland: Local Transport," n.d., <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/poland/transport/getting-around/local-transport>
- 92 Phil Sylvester, "Transport Options in Poland: How to Get Around," World Nomads, 4 December 2019, <https://www.worldnomads.com/explore/eastern-europe/poland/public-transport-safety-in-poland>
- 93 Adam Karolak, "Public Transport in Poland—The Reality and Prospects," Intelligent Transport, 25 February 2016, <https://www.intelligenttransport.com/transport-articles/18367/public-transport-in-poland-2/>
- 94 iExplore, "Poland—Transportation," n.d., <https://www.iexplore.com/articles/travel-guides/europe/poland/transportation>
- 95 Lonely Planet, "Poland: Local Transport," n.d., <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/poland/transport/getting-around/local-transport>
- 96 Overseas Security Advisory Council, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, U.S. Department of State, "Poland 2019 Crime & Safety Report," 2019, <https://www.osac.gov/Country/Poland/Content/Detail/Report/3a89580c-512f-404b-9f9a-15f4aeb14091>
- 97 iExplore, "Poland—Transportation," n.d., <https://www.iexplore.com/articles/travel-guides/europe/poland/transportation>
- 98 Lonely Planet, "Poland: Train," n.d., <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/poland/transport/getting-around/train>
- 99 Smarter Travel, "Getting Around Poland: Transportation Tips," 19 June 2017, <https://www.smartertravel.com/getting-around-poland-transportation-tips/>
- 100 Smarter Travel, "Getting Around Poland: Transportation Tips," 19 June 2017, <https://www.smartertravel.com/getting-around-poland-transportation-tips/>
- 101 Warsaw Chopin Airport, "Warsaw Airport—Chopin Airport," n.d., <https://www.warsaw-airport.com/>

## Street Crime

Poland's cities are considered among the safest in Europe. Pickpocketing is among the most widely reported criminal complaints. Pickpocketing often occurs on buses and trams, crowded public spaces like city squares, and other tourist areas. Thieves can work in pairs or groups to distract, jostle, or disorient potential victims. The urban area comprising Gdynia, Sopot, and Gdańsk in the north of the country is considered the most dangerous place for tourists. Alcohol-related assaults or brawls can occur late at night at bars or nightclubs.<sup>102, 103, 104</sup>

Credit card fraud is becoming more prevalent, especially in Kraków. In one scam, hotel guests receive late-night calls purporting to be from the front desk asking to verify their credit card information. The caller is actually a scammer trying to obtain credit card numbers. Some restaurants or bars have been known to charge tourists excessively high prices, especially for drinks.<sup>105, 106</sup>

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102 Overseas Security Advisory Council, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, U.S. Department of State, "Poland 2019 Crime & Safety Report," 2019, <https://www.osac.gov/Country/Poland/Content/Detail/Report/3a89580c-512f-404b-9f9a-15f4aeb14091>

103 Phil Sylvester, "Transport Options in Poland: How to Get Around," World Nomads, 4 December 2019, <https://www.worldnomads.com/explore/eastern-europe/poland/public-transport-safety-in-poland>

104 Phil Sylvester, "6 Tips on Scams and Crime in Poland," World Nomads, 6 September 2019, <https://www.worldnomads.com/travel-safety/eastern-europe/poland/scams-cons-and-fake-polish-cops>

105 Overseas Security Advisory Council, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, U.S. Department of State, "Poland 2019 Crime & Safety Report," 2019, <https://www.osac.gov/Country/Poland/Content/Detail/Report/3a89580c-512f-404b-9f9a-15f4aeb14091>

106 Phil Sylvester, "6 Tips on Scams and Crime in Poland," World Nomads, 6 September 2019, <https://www.worldnomads.com/travel-safety/eastern-europe/poland/scams-cons-and-fake-polish-cops>

# Polish Orientation

## Chapter 4 | Urban Life, Assessment

Read the following statements and answer True or False

1. Poland is a leader in the field of urban planning, neighborhood consolidation, architecture, transportation, and landscape design.  True  False
2. Poland is renowned for its institutions of higher learning.  True  False
3. When Polish restaurants serve fish, they charge per weight rather than per item.  True  False
4. Smoking in bars and restaurants is still permitted in Poland.  True  False
5. Poland's official currency is the euro. It is one of the 19 EU countries that together constitute the Eurozone.  True  False

# Polish Orientation

## Chapter 4 | Urban Life, Assessment Answers

1. False:  
Only 30% of municipal territory is subjected to proper urban planning. Urban development takes place on an ad-hoc manner, resulting in unplanned urban sprawl. The chaotic development pattern reduces the availability of public spaces and jeopardizes the development of transport infrastructure.
2. True:  
Jagiellonian University in Kraków, founded in 1364, is one of Europe's oldest universities. The world's first national ministry of education was established in Poland in 1773. The Catholic University of Lublin was the only private university in the Soviet bloc between 1945 and 1989.
3. True:  
The price for fish is often per 100 g (3.5 oz) instead of per serving.
4. True:  
Poland imposed a smoking ban in 2010, however, many establishments provide a larger space for their smoking patrons and a small enclosed space for nonsmokers.
5. False:  
Poland does not officially use the euro. The euro may be accepted at airports, hotels, and supermarkets.

# Chapter 5 | Rural Life



Shepherds with grazing sheep, Koniaków.  
Flickr / Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

## Introduction

Over nine-tenths of Poland's territory and some 40% of its population are considered rural. Unlike much of the rest of the world, Poland's rural population is slowly increasing as city dwellers, who hold an idealized fondness for rural life, are choosing to move to the countryside. The realities of daily life for most rural Poles are starker, as rural areas lag behind cities in terms of quality of life. Rural resentment of urban elites played a large role in the coming to power of the conservative PiS in 2015. Nevertheless, the rural-urban development divide is slowly closing, helped in large measure by funds that have flowed into Poland since it joined the European Union in 2004.<sup>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</sup>

- 1 Przemysław Sadura, "Poland's Futures: A View from the Countryside," Green European Journal, 8 May 2019, <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/polands-futures-a-view-from-the-countryside/>
- 2 Monika Scislowska, "Poland's Populist Govt Brings Hope to Struggling Rural Areas," Associated Press, 27 February 2017, <https://apnews.com/86d793b16386437398ff4a3869b9ea66/polands-populist-govt-brings-hope-struggling-rural-areas>
- 3 OECD iLibrary, "OECD Rural Policy Reviews: Poland 2018," 28 March 2018, [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/oecd-rural-policy-reviews-poland-2018\\_9789264289925-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/oecd-rural-policy-reviews-poland-2018_9789264289925-en)
- 4 Agnieszka Wrzochalska and Barbara Chmielewska, "Economic and social changes in rural areas in Poland," Rural Areas and Development, European Rural Development Network (ERDN), 2017, <https://ideas.repec.org/a/ags/erdnra/273083.html>
- 5 Statistics Poland, "Rural Areas in Poland in 2016," 16 May 2018, <https://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/agriculture-forestry/agriculture/rural-areas-in-poland-in-2016,3,3.html>

## Land Tenure and Distribution

Unlike in other Eastern Bloc countries, in communist Poland only about 25% of agricultural land was seized by the new authorities after World War II. The main targets of expropriation were large holdings of over 50 or 100 hectares (124 or 247 acres) and Catholic Church lands. The other three-fourths of agricultural land remained in private ownership, mainly as family farms.<sup>6</sup>

After the fall of communism in 1989, Poland embarked on a process of privatizing state-held agricultural lands. The lands were offered at auction or for sale at preferential terms. Pre-World War II landowners or their heirs received the first rights of purchase, followed by the current leaseholders and then family farmers. By 2011, the vast majority of formerly state-owned agricultural lands had been either sold or leased to private farmers.<sup>7</sup>

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

*Exchange 17*

Poland's abundant and rich rural land is an enticing prospect for Western European farmers and investors. After Poland joined the European union in 2004, it received a 12-year exemption from rules that would have allowed foreigners to easily purchase land in Poland. As that period was coming to an end in 2016, the government passed a controversial law restricting farmland ownership rights. Prospective purchasers of farmland had to be qualified farmers, live nearby for five years, and pledge to personally work the land. The law also closed bureaucratic loopholes that had allowed foreign investors to buy Polish farmland after 2004. The law has been accused of violating EU rules on discrimination and the free movement of capital. It was amended in 2019 to add more flexibility to the market for farmland.<sup>8, 9, 10</sup>

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- 6 Morten Hartvigsen, "Land Reform in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 and Its Outcome in the Form of Farm Structures and Land Fragmentation," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2013, <http://www.fao.org/3/a-aq097e.pdf>
- 7 Morten Hartvigsen, "Land Reform in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 and Its Outcome in the Form of Farm Structures and Land Fragmentation," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2013, <http://www.fao.org/3/a-aq097e.pdf>
- 8 Jan Cienski, "Poland Raises Fences to Block Farmland Sales," Politico, 26 April 2016, <https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-raises-fences-to-block-farmland-sales/>
- 9 Alina Zróbek-Róz'ań and Joanna Zielińska-Szczepkowska, "National Land Use Policy against the Misuse of the Agricultural Land—Causes and Effects. Evidence from Poland," 14 November 2019, <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/22/6403>
- 10 Agroberichten Buitenland, "Changes Regarding Lease of Agricultural Land in Poland," Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, 26 November 2017, <https://www.agroberichtenbuitenland.nl/actueel/nieuws/2017/10/26/lease-of-agricultural-land-in-poland-changes>

## Rural Economy

Poland's agricultural production is formidable, driven mostly by small, privately owned family farms. Poland ranks second in the world in potato production and sixth in the production of milk and pigs. The country is one of the European Union's leading food exporters. Yet an EU-wide emphasis on economic diversification is leading to the growing importance of industry and services, and a diminishing contribution to GDP from agriculture, forestry, and fishing.<sup>11, 12, 13, 14, 15</sup>

Agricultural land makes up 48.2% of Poland's territory.<sup>16</sup> Farm structures vary by region, but the average farm is small, at 10.5 hectares (26 acres).<sup>17, 18</sup> The largest fertile regions are in central and southwestern Poland—specifically, the Central Lowlands and Lower Silesia.<sup>19</sup> In northern and central Poland, the presence of large tracts of arable land has contributed to soil erosion and the straining of water resources.<sup>20</sup> In recent years, heatwaves and droughts have reduced harvests.<sup>21</sup>

After 2004, EU subsidies began playing a significant role in Poland's rural economy. Money from funds like the Common Agricultural Policy and the Cohesion Policy improved farmers' incomes and contributed to the development of villages and the food industry. Poland's agricultural subsidies consistently rank among the highest in the European Union.<sup>22, 23, 24, 25</sup>

Poland's agricultural land is shrinking, being taken over by residential and commercial development, industrial sites, and infrastructure. Sometimes agricultural land is deliberately allowed to become fallow, to better justify its sale and repurposing for nonagricultural uses. Some poor-quality agricultural land is being reforested. The shrinking proportion of available agricultural land is causing farmers to intensively cultivate existing lands.<sup>26</sup>

The overall quality of life in rural areas is worse than in urban areas. Rural Poles spend more of their money on basic needs and less on education, recreation, and culture than urban Poles. Rural Poland also has worse access

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- 11 Industry Europe, "Report: Poland's Biggest Industry Sectors," 26 September 2018, <https://industryeurope.com/repo/>
- 12 Statistics Poland, "Rural Areas in Poland in 2016," 16 May 2018, <https://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/agriculture-forestry/agriculture/rural-areas-in-poland-in-2016,3,3.html>
- 13 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 14 Jan Cienski, "Poland Raises Fences to Block Farmland Sales," Politico, 26 April 2016, <https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-raises-fences-to-block-farmland-sales/>
- 15 Nina Drejerska, "Are Polish Rural Areas Destinations for Commuting?" Research Gate, January 2016, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306120021\\_ARE\\_POLISH\\_RURAL\\_AREAS\\_DESTINATIONS\\_FOR\\_COMMUTING](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306120021_ARE_POLISH_RURAL_AREAS_DESTINATIONS_FOR_COMMUTING)
- 16 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland," *The World Factbook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
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- 18 Morten Hartvigsen, "Land Reform in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 and Its Outcome in the Form of Farm Structures and Land Fragmentation," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2013, <http://www.fao.org/3/a-aq097e.pdf>
- 19 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>
- 20 Jerzy Bański, "Structure and Ownership of Agricultural Land in Poland in the First Years of New Millennium," *Journal of Agricultural Science and Technology B 4 (2014): 85-93*, <http://www.davidpublisher.org/Public/uploads/Contribute/552f712568763.pdf>
- 21 Jonathan Watts, "Can Poland Wean Itself off Coal?" *Guardian*, 14 December 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/14/poland-wean-coal-climate>
- 22 Agnieszka Wrzochalska and Barbara Chmielewska, "Economic and social changes in rural areas in Poland," Rural Areas and Development, European Rural Development Network (ERDN), 2017, <https://ideas.repec.org/a/ags/erdnra/273083.html>
- 23 Statistics Poland, "Rural Areas in Poland in 2016," 16 May 2018, <https://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/agriculture-forestry/agriculture/rural-areas-in-poland-in-2016,3,3.html>
- 24 First News, "Cabinet Adopts Draft Guidelines for EU Funding of Rural Areas," 11 February 2020, <https://www.thefirstnews.com/article/cabinet-adopts-draft-guidelines-for-eu-funding-of-rural-areas-10419>
- 25 First News, "Over EUR 3 Bln More in EU Cohesion Funds for Poland—Minister," 17 February 2020, <https://www.thefirstnews.com/article/over-eur-3-bln-more-in-eu-cohesion-funds-for-poland---minister-10529>
- 26 Jerzy Bański, "Structure and Ownership of Agricultural Land in Poland in the First Years of New Millennium," *Journal of Agricultural Science and Technology B 4 (2014): 85-93*, <http://www.davidpublisher.org/Public/uploads/Contribute/552f712568763.pdf>



to basic services like sewers and natural gas, as well as modern household equipment like internet connections and cable TV. More rural households are at risk of poverty than urban ones. Despite rural Poles making up only 40% of the population, they account for over half of the beneficiaries of social welfare. Rural areas in eastern Poland are among the poorest regions in the European Union.<sup>27, 28, 29</sup>

The average income in rural Poland is lower than in cities. There are more working-age people in rural than urban areas, yet the unemployment rate in rural areas is higher. The share of agricultural income is decreasing in favor of income from pensions and nonagricultural employment.<sup>30, 31</sup>

The quality of life in rural Poland is slowly improving, but the change may be due to an influx of urbanites moving to the countryside. Urbanite managers and freelancers, often with comfortable incomes, as well as retirees, are choosing to take up residence in idyllic villages and towns near large cities. This demographic shift is concurrent with a decrease in agricultural employment in the rural economy in favor of jobs in the services sector. But while the services sector is driving overall improvement in the rural economy, remote rural areas far from cities are experiencing joblessness and stagnation.<sup>32, 33, 34, 35</sup>

## Rural Transportation

Since the collapse of the communist regime in 1989, many bus routes that served Poland's rural areas were canceled because they were too expensive to operate. Because of continuing depopulation of some rural areas, public transportation has diminished even more in recent years. It is estimated that up to 14 million people are affected by the lack of public transport. About 26% of the villages in Poland have no bus connections to bigger towns or cities. Bus service is not subsidized by the state. To overcome the lack of public transport, many people go to neighboring countries to buy cheap older cars, many of which do not meet emission standards.<sup>36</sup>

In 2019, the government promised to restore bus connections to villages and small towns in order to revitalize the economy and social life in rural areas. The government allocated PLN 300 million (USD 75 million) to restore bus lines that had been eliminated because of unprofitability.<sup>37, 38</sup>

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- 27 Andrzej Rosner and Monika Stanny, "Socio-economic Development of Rural Areas in Poland," European Fund for the Development of Polish Villages Foundation; Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences, 2017, [http://www.irwirpan.waw.pl/dir\\_upload/site/files/Lukasz/MROW\\_en\\_2017.pdf](http://www.irwirpan.waw.pl/dir_upload/site/files/Lukasz/MROW_en_2017.pdf)
- 28 Agnieszka Wrzochalska and Barbara Chmielewska, "Economic and social changes in rural areas in Poland," Rural Areas and Development, European Rural Development Network (ERDN), 2017, <https://ideas.repec.org/a/ags/erdnra/273083.html>
- 29 Statistics Poland, "Rural Areas in Poland in 2016," 16 May 2018, <https://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/agriculture-forestry/agriculture/rural-areas-in-poland-in-2016,3,3.html>
- 30 Agnieszka Wrzochalska and Barbara Chmielewska, "Economic and social changes in rural areas in Poland," Rural Areas and Development, European Rural Development Network (ERDN), 2017, <https://ideas.repec.org/a/ags/erdnra/273083.html>
- 31 Statistics Poland, "Rural Areas in Poland in 2016," 16 May 2018, <https://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/agriculture-forestry/agriculture/rural-areas-in-poland-in-2016,3,3.html>
- 32 Agnieszka Wrzochalska and Barbara Chmielewska, "Economic and social changes in rural areas in Poland," Rural Areas and Development, European Rural Development Network (ERDN), 2017, <https://ideas.repec.org/a/ags/erdnra/273083.html>
- 33 Nina Drejerska, "Are Polish Rural Areas Destinations for Commuting?" Research Gate, January 2016, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306120021\\_ARE\\_POLISH\\_RURAL\\_AREAS\\_DESTINATIONS\\_FOR\\_COMMUTING](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306120021_ARE_POLISH_RURAL_AREAS_DESTINATIONS_FOR_COMMUTING)
- 34 Przemysław Sadura, "Poland's Futures: A View from the Countryside," Green European Journal, 8 May 2019, <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/polands-futures-a-view-from-the-countryside/>
- 35 Statistics Poland, "Rural Areas in Poland in 2016," 16 May 2018, <https://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/agriculture-forestry/agriculture/rural-areas-in-poland-in-2016,3,3.html>
- 36 Joanna Ciesielska-Klikowska, "Poland Social Briefing: Society and the Problem of Local Transport in Poland," Chine CEE Institute, 4 April 2019, <https://china-cee.eu/2019/04/04/poland-social-briefing-society-and-the-problem-of-local-transport-in-poland/>
- 37 Joanna Ciesielska-Klikowska, "Poland Social Briefing: Society and the Problem of Local Transport in Poland," Chine CEE Institute, 4 April 2019, <https://china-cee.eu/2019/04/04/poland-social-briefing-society-and-the-problem-of-local-transport-in-poland/>
- 38 Poland In, "Public Bus Transport Is Set to Return to Rural Poland," 18 July 2019, <https://polandin.com/43557787/public-bus-transport-is-set-to-return-to-rural-poland>

Long-term trends show that traffic in Poland has become safer for all users, with the exception of motorcyclists. Rural roads are the deadliest, accounting for 54% of all road-related deaths. Driving, especially on rural roads and after dark, is hazardous. Speeding is one of the main causes of crashes.<sup>39, 40</sup> Penalties for drivers involved in traffic accidents that result in injury or death can be severe and include imprisonment from six months to eight years. If the driver is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, they can be imprisoned for up to 12 years.<sup>41</sup>

Poland is a major east-west transit route for heavy vehicles so drivers have to be highly alert, keep a safe distance, and never try to overtake a truck unless it is safe to do so. Slow-moving agricultural vehicles and horse-drawn carts are common on rural roads, even on main roads. There are few highways, and they all require a toll.<sup>42, 43</sup>

Ferries and water taxis connect Poland to other Baltic Sea countries. Connections include Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany, and Finland. Gdańsk is Poland’s main port. Other ports are Gdynia, Szczecin, and Świnoujście. Ferry trips can take between nine hours and two days, depending on the point of origin, number of stops, and type of ship.<sup>44, 45</sup>

## Rural Healthcare

Healthcare in rural Poland lags slightly behind the standards set in cities. The less-dense distribution of healthcare infrastructure in rural areas means there are fewer medical professionals and healthcare institutions available to rural inhabitants. The number of people for each health facility per capita is almost double in rural areas, and the number of medical visits is lower. Access to emergency medical services and primary care is slightly lower in rural areas as well.<sup>46, 47, 48</sup>

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

Exchange 18

Rural Poles are more likely to die of cardiovascular disease, accidents, and injuries than urban Poles, but cancer is less prevalent in rural areas. Life expectancy is the same for rural and urban women; for rural men, it is one year less. The mortality rate is slightly lower in rural than in urban areas. Factors that contribute to the lower rural

- 39 OECD, “Road Safety Annual Report 2019: Poland,” International Transport Forum, 2019, <https://www.itf-oecd.org/sites/default/files/poland-road-safety.pdf>
- 40 iExplore, “Poland—Transportation,” n.d., <https://www.iexplore.com/articles/travel-guides/europe/poland/transportation>
- 41 Phil Sylvester, “Driving in Poland: 4 Tips for a Safe Journey,” World Nomads, 6 September 2019, <https://www.worldnomads.com/travel-safety/eastern-europe/poland/polands-poor-driver-record>
- 42 Phil Sylvester, “Driving in Poland: 4 Tips for a Safe Journey,” World Nomads, 6 September 2019, <https://www.worldnomads.com/travel-safety/eastern-europe/poland/polands-poor-driver-record>
- 43 Gayle Keck, “Getting Around Poland: Transportation Tips,” SmarterTravel, 19 June 2017, <https://www.smartertravel.com/getting-around-poland-transportation-tips/>
- 44 iExplore, “Poland—Transportation,” n.d., <https://www.iexplore.com/articles/travel-guides/europe/poland/transportation>
- 45 Gayle Keck, “Getting Around Poland: Transportation Tips,” SmarterTravel, 19 June 2017, <https://www.smartertravel.com/getting-around-poland-transportation-tips/>
- 46 Christoph Sowada et al., “Poland: Health System Review,” *Health Systems in Transition* 21, no. 1 (2019), <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/325143/18176127-eng.pdf?sequence=1>
- 47 Agnieszka Wrzochalska and Barbara Chmielewska, “Economic and social changes in rural areas in Poland,” Rural Areas and Development, European Rural Development Network (ERDN), 2017, <https://ideas.repec.org/a/ags/erdnra/273083.html>
- 48 International Student Insurance, “Healthcare in Poland,” n.d., <https://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/poland-student-insurance/healthcare-in-poland.php>

mortality rate include improving rural healthcare, a cleaner natural environment, and the higher levels of physical effort exerted by rural Poles.<sup>49, 50</sup>

From experiencing times of significant hardship, Poles developed a wide variety of traditional homemade remedies, often propagated by respected grandmothers. A popular home remedy for a cold is a syrup of honey and onions, as is rubbing garlic on the nose. Warm cabbage leaves are used as compresses for bruises and ulcers. A mixture of Vitamin C and rutin, a plant pigment, is thought to help against a wide array of ailments. Despite the popularity of such folk remedies, Poles trust scientific medicine and follow doctors' orders and prescriptions.<sup>51, 52, 53</sup>

## Who's in Charge?

The town or commune (*gmina*) is the fundamental unit of local government in Poland. There are approximately 2,500 *gminy* throughout the country.<sup>54</sup> Towns and communes are governed by mayors, who are elected by popular vote. A mayor's responsibilities include managing day-to-day affairs like healthcare, welfare, education, and culture. The mayor implements resolutions and budgets, manages town property, and engages with other government agencies.<sup>55, 56</sup>

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

Exchange 19

Mayors are held accountable by municipal councils, whose members are also chosen by direct elections. Councils approve the mayor's budget and have other regulatory authorities. Council members serve four-year terms.<sup>57, 58</sup>

At the next level of local government in Poland are districts (*powiaty*), of which there are 380. Districts are also governed by elected councils, whose responsibilities include managing hospitals and public roads and combatting unemployment. Districts are organized into 16 self-governing provinces (*województwa*), reflecting the country's historical regions. Provinces are administered by popularly elected provincial legislatures (*sejmiki*

49 Christoph Sowada et al., "Poland: Health System Review," *Health Systems in Transition* 21, no. 1 (2019), <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/325143/18176127-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

50 Agnieszka Wrzochalska and Barbara Chmielewska, "Economic and social changes in rural areas in Poland," Rural Areas and Development, European Rural Development Network (ERDN), 2017, <https://ideas.repec.org/a/ags/erdnra/273083.html>

51 Wojciech Oleksiak, "Rub Yourself with Cabbage & 6 Other Health Tips from Polish Grandmas," Culture.pl, 19 August 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/rub-yourself-with-cabbage-and-6-other-health-tips-from-polish-grandmas>

52 Lamar Soutter Library, "Cultural Approaches to Pediatric Palliative Care in Central Massachusetts: Polish," 4 January 2019, [https://libraryguides.umassmed.edu/diversity\\_guide/polish](https://libraryguides.umassmed.edu/diversity_guide/polish)

53 Ana Gotter, "The Potential Health Benefits of Rutin," Healthline, 12 January 2017, <https://www.healthline.com/health/potential-benefits-of-rutin>

54 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

55 Justyna Przywojska et al., "Perceptions of Priority Policy Areas and Interventions for Urban Sustainability in Polish Municipalities: Can Polish Cities Become Smart, Inclusive and Green?" MDPI, 21 July 2019, <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/14/3962>

56 Eurydice, "Poland: Main Executive and Legislative Bodies," 19 December 2019, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-executive-and-legislative-bodies-56\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-executive-and-legislative-bodies-56_en)

57 Justyna Przywojska et al., "Perceptions of Priority Policy Areas and Interventions for Urban Sustainability in Polish Municipalities: Can Polish Cities Become Smart, Inclusive and Green?" MDPI, 21 July 2019, <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/14/3962>

58 Norman Davies et al., "Poland," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

*województwie*). The provincial governor (wojewoda) represents the national government and is nominated by the prime minister.<sup>59, 60, 61</sup>

## Border Crossings and Checkpoints

Poland has been a part of Europe’s visa-free Schengen zone since 2007. Its citizens can cross the borders freely into its neighboring EU countries (Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Lithuania). Although there are signs on the main roads marking national borders, there are no immigration or customs controls at the crossings. People from both sides can visit each other without any obstacles.<sup>62</sup>

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

Exchange 20

Poland manages one of the longest sections of the European Union’s external land border, sharing 1,163 km (722 mi) of land borders with non-EU countries. The border with Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine is meant to protect the European Union from human trafficking, smuggling, and organized cross-border crime. Some border crossings allow pedestrians and cyclists to cross on specific hours during the day.<sup>63</sup>

Currently, Poland has 16 border crossings with Germany, 18 with the Czech Republic, 5 with Slovakia, and 3 with Lithuania. As for non-EU countries, Poland has 8 border crossings with Ukraine, 4 with Russia’s Kaliningrad enclave, and 6 with Belarus.<sup>64</sup> Residents of Kaliningrad prefer to cross the border to buy their groceries and gasoline, both of which are cheaper in Poland.<sup>65</sup> In March 2020, Poland imposed restrictions on foreign travel with its neighbors to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.<sup>66</sup>

59 Norman Davies et al., “Poland,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 February 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

60 Stay Poland, “Polish Provinces,” n.d., <https://www.staypoland.com/poland/polish-provinces/>

61 Eurydice, “Poland: Main Executive and Legislative Bodies,” 19 December 2019, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-executive-and-legislative-bodies-56\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-executive-and-legislative-bodies-56_en)

62 Krzysztof Mrozek, “Pedestrian Border Crossings—Diagnosis, Arguments and Recommendations,” Stefan Batory Foundation, 2016, <http://www.batory.org.pl/upload/files/Programy%20operacyjne/Otwarta%20Europa/Batory%20Foundation%20-%20Pedestrian%20border%20crossings%20-%20policy%20brief.pdf>

63 Krzysztof Mrozek, “Pedestrian Border Crossings—Diagnosis, Arguments and Recommendations,” Stefan Batory Foundation, 2016, <http://www.batory.org.pl/upload/files/Programy%20operacyjne/Otwarta%20Europa/Batory%20Foundation%20-%20Pedestrian%20border%20crossings%20-%20policy%20brief.pdf>

64 Poland In, “Situation on Polish Borders Improves, EC Notified: Report,” 20 March 2020, <https://polandin.com/47204972/situation-on-polish-borders-improves-ec-notified-report>

65 Yulia Paramonova, “With COVID-19, Russia’s Kaliningrad Exclave Finds Itself Even More Isolated,” Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 16 March 2020, <https://www.rferl.org/a/as-eu-neighbors-poland-lithuania-close-borders-over-covid-19-russia-s-baltic-exclave-finds-itself-even-more-isolated/30491060.html>

66 Bartosz Wawryszuk, “Poland Closes Some of Its Border Crossings. See Which Routes You Can Still Get into the Country,” Trans Info, 14 March 2020, <https://trans.info/en/poland-closes-some-of-its-border-crossings-check-out-which-routes-you-can-still-enter-the-country-176964>

## Landmines

Poland signed the Mine Ban Treaty in 1997, ratified it in 2012, and became a party to it in 2013. In 2016, Poland completed the process of destroying its entire stockpile of antipersonnel mines ahead of the June 2017 deadline. In total, over one million landmines were destroyed. The process was environmentally friendly and the mine components were recycled. Today, Poland does not produce, export, or use antipersonnel mines.<sup>67, 68, 69</sup>

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

*Exchange 21*

Every year thousands of unexploded World War II-era mines and grenades are found and dismantled. In 2018, more than 100 antipersonnel mines were found at a construction site in southern Poland. Experts say it may take up to 200 years to discover and destroy all the leftover ordnance from World War II.<sup>70</sup>

67 Marek Dąbrowski and Jakub Palowski, "Poland Gets Rid of Its Landmines Inventory. Time for "Smart" Defence Systems?" Defence 24, 22 December 2016, <https://www.defence24.com/geopolitics/poland-gets-rid-of-its-landmines-inventory-time-for-smart-defence-systems>

68 Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor, "Poland Mine Ban Policy," 26 October 2017, <http://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2019/poland/mine-ban-policy.aspx>

69 International Campaign to Ban Landmines, "Poland Completes Destruction of Stockpiled Landmines," 28 November 2016, <http://www.icbl.org/en-gb/news-and-events/news/2016/poland-completes-destruction-of-stockpiled-landmines.aspx>

70 Poland In, "More Than 100 Landmines Found in Tarnów, Southern Poland," 29 March 2018, <https://polandin.com/36590946/landmines-found-on-construction-site-in-southern-poland>

# Polish Cultural Orientation

## Chapter 5 | Rural Life, Assessment

Read the following statements and answer True or False

1. After World War II, the new communist authorities seized the vast majority of Poland's farmland from farmers and turned it into communal cooperatives.  True  False
2. Poland's agricultural production is driven mostly by small, privately owned family farms.  True  False
3. Ferries and water taxis connect Poland to other Baltic Sea countries.  True  False
4. The town or commune (*gminy*) is the fundamental unit of local government in Poland.  True  False
5. Many Poles living near the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad routinely cross the border to purchase discounted consumer goods there.  True  False

# Polish Cultural Orientation

## Chapter 5 | Rural Life, Assessment Answers

1. False:  
Unlike in other Eastern Bloc countries, only about 25% of agricultural land in communist Poland was seized after World War II.
2. True:  
Poland is one of the European Union's leading food exporters. Farm structures vary by region, but the average farm is small, at 10.5 hectares (26 acres).
3. True:  
Gdansk is Poland's main port. Connections include Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany, and Finland.
4. True:  
There are approximately 2,500 *gminy* throughout the country.
5. False:  
Russians in Kaliningrad are the ones who cross the border in search of more affordable goods such as groceries and gasoline, which are cheaper in Poland.

## Chapter 6 | Family Life



Polish family in Wólka Lesiewska.  
Flickr / Daniel Kulinski

### Introduction

In Poland, the family is the most important part of life, for individuals as well as on the national stage. Families are close-knit and grandparents often live with their adult children and grandchildren. In many cases, both parents may work outside the home, but tradition dictates that women be responsible for household work and childcare. Families value regular gatherings with extended family members and celebrate holidays and birthdays together. Because of population decline and the relatively small size of Polish families, the government has initiated several programs to encourage women to have more babies. Ceremonies surrounding weddings, births, and funerals come from rich and colorful popular traditions.<sup>1,2</sup>

1 AAFS-USA, "Polish People and Community," n.d., <https://www.afsusa.org/countries/poland/#afs-nav-people>

2 Cultural Atlas, "Polish Culture: Family," n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-family#polish-culture-family>



## Household and Family Structure

A Polish household usually consists of three generations—grandparents, parents, and children—all living together. The average family in Poland has 2.64 people. Nuclear families are becoming more common in urban areas. Family members are close-knit and have strong emotional connections.<sup>3</sup> The high costs of living and economic uncertainty often make Polish couples postpone starting families.<sup>4</sup>

The family hierarchy is patriarchal. The father is the dominant authority figure who makes important financial decisions, especially if the grandfather is already retired or in failing health. The mother is the second in command, responsible for household chores, childcare, and elder care even if she is also employed. Grandparents supported by their adult children are third in the hierarchy; they care for the children and supervise their activities when the parents are busy. Children are at the bottom of the hierarchy and have few responsibilities, although they are expected to help their parents. Most Poles recognize the power balance between parents since communist-era policies improved gender equality. Today, most parents work outside the home.<sup>5,6</sup>

### Children

Poland's shrinking population has turned fertility into a sensitive political issue.<sup>7</sup> The fertility rate is expected to rise from 1.39 in 2017 to 1.42 in 2020.<sup>8,9</sup> In order to encourage families to have more children, the government has initiated family-friendly policies. Access to daycare or preschool begins at three years old and is free. As of 2017, over 42% of three-year-olds and above were in preschools. The Family 500+ program, introduced in 2016, provides families with PLN 500 (USD 117) per child every month. The program is intended to aid heterosexual couples and their biological children. Single-parent families, considered incomplete by some PiS officials, also receive a monthly check. The program has not dramatically increased birthrates, but it has given women more power in the household and subsequently discouraged them from reentering the labor force. Conservative parents' associations and church groups that oppose sex education in schools and same-sex families support the focus on traditional family values.<sup>10,11,12,13</sup> In 2019 the government introduced a new monthly benefit for retired mothers who raised four or more children.<sup>14</sup>

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- 3 Hierarchy Structure, "Polish Family Hierarchy," n.d., <https://www.hierarchystructure.com/polish-family-hierarchy/>
- 4 Adriana Sas, "Birth Rate in Poland 1950–2018," Statista, 4 March 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/429152/birth-rate-in-poland/>
- 5 Hierarchy Structure, "Polish Family Hierarchy," n.d., <https://www.hierarchystructure.com/polish-family-hierarchy/>
- 6 Cultural Atlas, "Polish Culture: Family," n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-family#polish-culture-family>
- 7 Warsaw Business Journal, "Poland Experiences Lowest Birth Rate since WWII," 3 February 2020, <https://wbj.pl/poland-experiences-lowest-birth-rate-since-wwii/post/125939>
- 8 Aaron O'Neill, "Total Fertility Rate in Poland from 1800 until 2020," Statista, 20 August 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1033939/fertility-rate-poland-1800-2020/>
- 9 World Bank, "Fertility Rate, Total (Births Per Woman)—Poland," 2017, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?locations=PL>
- 10 Anna Louie Sussman, "The Poland Model—Promoting 'Family Values' with Cash Handouts," *Atlantic*, 14 October 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/10/poland-family-values-cash-handouts/599968/>
- 11 Marissa Evans, "In Poland, Midwives Play a Significant Role in Childbirth. In Texas? Not So Much," *Texas Tribune*, 3 July 2018, <https://www.texastribune.org/2018/07/03/poland-midwives-play-significant-role-childbirth-texas-not-so-much/>
- 12 Shaun Walker, "Baby Machines: Eastern Europe's Answer to Depopulation," *Guardian*, 4 March 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/04/baby-bonuses-fit-the-nationalist-agenda-but-do-they-work>
- 13 Warsaw Business Journal, "Poland Experiences Lowest Birth Rate since WWII," 3 February 2020, <https://wbj.pl/poland-experiences-lowest-birth-rate-since-wwii/post/125939>
- 14 European Commission, "Country Profiles—Poland: Policies and Progress towards Investing in Children," 21 May 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1248&langId=en&intPageld=3652>

### Are these people part of your family?

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

Exchange 22

Nearly 17% of children under 16 are considered at risk of poverty or social exclusion (the EU average is 24.4%). The government provides financial support to families in need and subsidies for the distribution of hot meals to poor families with school-age children.<sup>15</sup>

Parents generally expect obedience from their children, but in general, they want them to be independent and self-reliant. Children are often given considerable responsibilities from an early age.<sup>16</sup>

### Adolescents

Nearly 10% of Poland’s population is between 15 and 24.<sup>17</sup> Despite the influence of the Catholic Church, cultural pressures to become responsible members of society, and the emphasis on patriotism and moral values, urban Polish teenagers are comparable to their counterparts in Western countries. Internet cafes, bowling alleys, cinemas, fast-food restaurants, and shopping malls are popular destinations for teens. Many teens learn English instead of Russian, which their parents were forced to learn. In recent years, obesity has become a problem among teens, with 10% of males and nearly 4% of females considered obese. Girls are raised to become mothers and wives. While Polish teens can date, premarital sex is considered wrong and is strongly condemned.<sup>18, 19, 20</sup>

### Do you have any brothers?

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

Exchange 23

Rural teenagers have a somewhat different lifestyle. Those who live on farms help their parents with siblings and farm work. Teens from poor families often find entertainment in small-town clubs or from smoking and drinking. The legal drinking age in Poland is 18.<sup>21, 22</sup> Substance abuse among adolescents is rising. More than 21% of 15- to 19-year-olds smoke tobacco or e-cigarettes.<sup>23, 24</sup>

- 15 European Commission, “Country Profiles—Poland: Policies and Progress towards Investing in Children,” 21 May 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1248&langId=en&intPagId=3652>
- 16 Cultural Atlas, “Poland: Family,” n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-family#polish-culture-family>
- 17 Central Intelligence Agency, “Poland: People and Society,” *World Factbook*, 1 March 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 18 Polish Marriage, “Polish Teens and Their Dreams,” n.d., <https://polishmarriage.org/polish-teens.html>
- 19 Polish Marriage, “Polish Teenagers,” n.d., <https://polishmarriage.org/stories/polish-teen.html>
- 20 Adriana Sas, “Prevalence of Adolescent Obesity in Poland From 1975 To 2016, By Gender,” Statista, 1 November 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1017548/prevalence-of-adolescent-obesity-in-poland/>
- 21 Polish Marriage, “Polish Teenagers,” n.d., <https://polishmarriage.org/stories/polish-teen.html>
- 22 Poland In, “Over Half of Shops in Poland Found Ready to Sell Alcohol to Minors,” 13 July 2018, <https://polandin.com/38061727/over-half-of-shops-in-poland-found-ready-to-sell-alcohol-to-minors>
- 23 Cancer Council, “Youth Tobacco Smoking in Poland Surges in Step with Electronic Cigarette Use,” 13 November 2017, <https://www.cancer.org.au/news/media-releases/youth-tobacco-smoking-in-poland-surges-in-step-with-electronic-cigarette-use.html>
- 24 Prevention Research Center, “New Study Examines Alcohol and Cigarettes Use among Polish Youth,” University of Michigan, 14 July 2015, <http://prc.sph.umich.edu/2016/07/new-study-examines-alcohol-cigarette-use-among-polish-youth/>

## Elders

Life expectancy in Poland, 82 years for women and 74 for men, is low by European standards. Experts predict that by 2030, 27% of the population will be 65 or older. The law obliges Poles to support their family members, including their aging parents, and parents can sue their adult children for withholding financial support.<sup>25, 26, 27</sup>

Traditional family values and frequent cohabitation of older people with their adult children mean that elderly people are cared for by their family and at home. Most caregivers are women in their 50s and 60s who sometimes have to give up their jobs to look after aging parents and in-laws. This tradition is especially common in rural areas. Since women live longer than men, the evolving demographic challenges, such as an aging society and low birth rates, affect women more than men.<sup>28, 29</sup>

Many Poles are reluctant to send their elderly family members to nursing homes because the wait time is long, the cost is high, the quality of care is low, many homes are understaffed, and the atmosphere is unfriendly. Furthermore, Polish society looks negatively upon sending elderly relatives to nursing homes. Despite these problems, more people are moving to nursing homes and residential care facilities. Most residents of health care facilities that offer long-term care are women, due to their higher longevity. Adult children are expected to help their parents move into nursing homes and to visit them often. Expenditures for long-term care in Poland are among the lowest in the European Union.<sup>30, 31</sup>

## Gender Issues

### Employment and Education

The constitution provides for equal rights for men and women and prohibits discrimination against women. While discrimination against women in employment still exists, Poland has the second-lowest gender pay gap in Europe.<sup>32</sup> Poland is ranked the eighth-best country for female employees and 21st in the global rankings on the PwC Women in Work Index. The unemployment rate among women was 5% in 2017. Poland also has the fourth-highest percentage of female full-time employment, reaching 90%.<sup>33, 34, 35</sup>

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- 25 Anne Kouvonen, "Growing Old in Poland," University of Jyväskylä, 23 October 2018, <https://www.jyu.fi/hytk/fi/laitokset/yfi/en/research/projects/agecare/growing-old-in-poland>
- 26 Central Intelligence Agency, "Poland: People and Society," *World Factbook*, 1 March 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- 27 Xavier Devictor, "Poland: Aging and the Economy," 12 June 2012, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2012/06/14/poland-aging-and-the-economy>
- 28 World Bank, "The Present and Future of Long-Term Care in Aging Poland," 30 November 2015, [https://das.mpips.gov.pl/source/opiekaseniortalna/Long%20term%20care%20in%20ageing%20Poland\\_ENG\\_FINAL.pdf](https://das.mpips.gov.pl/source/opiekaseniortalna/Long%20term%20care%20in%20ageing%20Poland_ENG_FINAL.pdf)
- 29 Xavier Devictor, "Poland: Aging and the Economy," 12 June 2012, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2012/06/14/poland-aging-and-the-economy>
- 30 Cultural Atlas, "Family," n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-family#polish-culture-family>
- 31 World Bank, "The Present and Future of Long-Term Care in Aging Poland," 30 November 2015, [https://das.mpips.gov.pl/source/opiekaseniortalna/Long%20term%20care%20in%20ageing%20Poland\\_ENG\\_FINAL.pdf](https://das.mpips.gov.pl/source/opiekaseniortalna/Long%20term%20care%20in%20ageing%20Poland_ENG_FINAL.pdf)
- 32 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Poland," 2018, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/poland/>
- 33 Nick Westerby, "Women on the Up in the Polish Workplace Finds New Global Report," *First News*, 28 September 2019, <https://www.thefirstnews.com/article/women-on-the-up-in-the-polish-workplace-finds-new-global-report-7808>
- 34 Joanna Jasińska, "Girl Power! Polish Women Soar to 8th Place in Global Employment Ranking," *First News*, 6 March 2019, <https://www.thefirstnews.com/article/girl-power-polish-women-soar-to-8th-place-in-global-employment-ranking-5020>
- 35 PwC, "Women in Work Index 2019," March 2019, <https://www.pwc.co.uk/economic-services/WIWI/pwc-women-in-work-2019-final-web.pdf>

Traditional views of women’s roles persist today. More than half of parents think that women should reduce work outside the home to care for the family. Women spend an average of almost 2.5 hours per day on unpaid work. Most users of parental leave benefits are women; less than 3% of fathers take parental leave.<sup>36</sup>

Young Polish women are more likely to have a university degree than young men but there are major differences in the subjects they study. Women make up 75% of graduates in healthcare and welfare studies but only 34% for engineering and 16% for computer studies. More than 80% of health and social services workers and 70% of teachers are women. On the brighter side, women are more likely to have permanent positions and work in professional occupations than men, and the proportion of women managers is one of the highest among Western countries (36%).<sup>37</sup>

## ***Domestic Violence***

The law requires municipalities to establish response teams to deal with domestic violence. Centers for victims of domestic violence throughout the country are expected to provide social, medical, psychological, and legal assistance, but they are not always as effective as mandated. Police have occasionally demonstrated a reluctance to intervene in domestic violence incidents. Rape, including spousal rape, is illegal and punishable by up to 12 years in prison. Courts may sentence a person convicted of domestic violence to a maximum of five years in prison, but most perpetrators found guilty receive suspended sentences.<sup>38</sup> An attempt to define domestic violence strictly as violence committed more than once against a spouse stalled after critics claimed it would legalize the first incident of domestic violence.<sup>39</sup>

The PiS-led government opposes the European Union’s accession to the Istanbul Convention, a treaty aimed at preventing violence against women and holding perpetrators to account. PiS claims that Polish women are treated better than elsewhere and that the convention promotes harmful gender ideology.<sup>40</sup> Poland is ranked 24th in the European Union in gender equality.<sup>41</sup>

36 OECD, “Closing the Gender Gap—Poland,” 2017, <http://www.oecd.org/gender/Closing%20the%20Gender%20Gap%20-%20Poland%20FINAL.pdf>

37 OECD, “Closing the Gender Gap—Poland,” 2017, <http://www.oecd.org/gender/Closing%20the%20Gender%20Gap%20-%20Poland%20FINAL.pdf>

38 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Poland,” 2018, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/poland/>

39 James Rothwell, “Poland Drops Plan to Legalise ‘One-Off’ Cases of Domestic Violence,” *Telegraph*, 2 January 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/01/02/poland-drops-plan-legalise-one-off-cases-domestic-violence/>

40 Agnieszka Bielecka, “Poland No Friend to Women,” Human Rights Watch, 3 December 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/03/poland-no-friend-women#>

41 European Institute for Gender Equality, “Gender Equality Index 2019: Poland,” 7 October 2019, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2019-poland>

## Married Life, Divorce and Birth

### Married Life

Marriage and family are strongly embedded in the value system of contemporary Poles. Poles tend to marry at a younger age than people from other European countries. More people aged 25–29 tend to get married than in other age groups. Couples are discouraged from living together before marriage. Parents provide financial assistance to young couples and allow newlyweds to live with them for the first few years.<sup>42, 43, 44</sup>

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

Exchange 24

The legal age for getting married is 18; 16-year-olds can marry with judicial approval. Poland recognizes traditional religious marriage ceremonies. These marriages are called “concordat marriages” and do not require a separate civil ceremony. Only certain churches are allowed to register marriages with the civil registry office. The Muslim Religious Unit, the Old-Rite Eastern Church, and the Karaim Religious Union are not allowed to register marriages. A foreigner who marries a Polish citizen is not granted citizenship automatically.<sup>45</sup> The number of marriages has declined in the past decade all over Europe and Poland is not an exception. In 2018, there were 5 marriages per 1,000 people, down from 6.8 in 2008.<sup>46</sup>

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

Exchange 25

Births outside of marriage are increasing, a result of growing numbers of domestic partnerships. They make up about 20% of all births; however, those rates are still among the lowest in Europe. About 23% of single parents experience some economic hardship.<sup>47, 48</sup>

42 Cultural Atlas, “Poland: Family,” n.d., <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/polish-culture/polish-culture-family#polish-culture-family>

43 Joanna Stańczak, Karina Stelmach, and Magdalena Urbanowicz, “Over 20 % of Births in Poland Are Births Outside Marriage,” Eurostat, November 2015, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:Marriages\\_and\\_births\\_in\\_Poland](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:Marriages_and_births_in_Poland)

44 Lindsay Dodgson, “The 21 European Countries Where the Average Marriage Age Is the Lowest,” Business Insider, 6 July 2017, <https://amp.businessinsider.com/lowest-marital-age-europe-2017-7>

45 Lawyers Poland, “Marriage Registration in Poland,” 27 October 2018, <https://www.lawyerspoland.eu/marriage-registration-in-poland>

46 Adriana Sas, “Marriage Rate in Poland 1995-2018,” Statista, 21 November 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/957206/poland-marriage-rate/>

47 Joanna Stańczak, Karina Stelmach, and Magdalena Urbanowicz, “Over 20 % of Births in Poland Are Births outside Marriage,” Eurostat, November 2015, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:Marriages\\_and\\_births\\_in\\_Poland](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:Marriages_and_births_in_Poland)

48 European Commission, “Country Profiles—Poland: Policies and Progress towards Investing in Children,” 21 May 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1248&langId=en&intPagId=3652>

## Divorce

Poland has around 32 divorces per 100 marriages, among the lowest rates in Europe.<sup>49</sup> Spouses live together for about 14 years before seeking a divorce. Most couples that file for divorce are in their late 30s to early 40s. The majority of divorce applications are filed by women. Some 74% of divorces are no-fault; the most common reason for divorce is “incompatibility of character.”<sup>50</sup>

Courts must determine that the breakdown of a marriage is permanent before granting a divorce. If one of the spouses claims fault, the court must rule who is at fault. Cheating, violence, addiction, poor relationship with the family, abandonment, idleness, and disloyalty are considered legal grounds for divorce. Courts settle child-related matters like visitation, child support, and residency as part of the divorce ruling. Divisions of assets are usually settled after the divorce is finalized.<sup>51, 52</sup>

## Birth

The birth rate in Poland has been dropping since the collapse of communism. In the 1950s, the number of live births was slightly above 30 per 1,000 people; in 2018, that number was 10 per 1,000. The maternal mortality rate has also dropped sharply since 1990, from 17 deaths per 100,000 births to two deaths in 2017, one of the lowest rates in the world. The age of women who give birth has increased, from 26 in 2000 to 29 in 2013.<sup>53, 54, 55, 56</sup>

Poland’s health care system covers services related to pregnancy, childbirth, and maternity care. The duration of maternity leave totals 20 weeks and can be extended to another 26 weeks after the child is born. Giving birth can be expensive in Poland because women stay in the hospital for 3–5 days after delivery, longer in case of complications. Women who give birth in public hospitals share a room with five or six other women. Some hospitals do not allow the father to be present during childbirth. Midwives can practice independently without a doctor’s supervision, prescribe medication, and act on their own in case of an emergency. There are 22,000 active midwives in Poland.<sup>57, 58, 59</sup>

49 Dennis Schmid, “Divorce Rates in Europe 2016, by Country (Per 100 Marriages),” Statista, 9 May 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/612207/divorce-rates-in-european-countries-per-100-marriages/>

50 Joanna Stańczak, Karina Stelmach, and Magdalena Urbanowicz, “Marriages and Births in Poland,” Eurostat, November 2015, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:Marriages\\_and\\_births\\_in\\_Poland#Stable\\_number\\_of\\_divorces](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:Marriages_and_births_in_Poland#Stable_number_of_divorces)

51 Polish Law for Foreigners, “Divorce Law,” 2017, <https://polishlawexplained.com/divorcelaw>

52 Ten: The European Network of Law Firms, “Divorcing in Poland,” n.d., <https://www.ten-law.net/knowledge/divorcing-in-poland/>

53 Adriana Sas, “Birth Rate in Poland 1950–2018,” Statista, 4 March 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/429152/birth-rate-in-poland/>

54 Marissa Evans, “In Poland, Midwives Play a Significant Role in Childbirth. In Texas? Not So Much,” Texas Tribune, 3 July 2018, <https://www.texastribune.org/2018/07/03/poland-midwives-play-significant-role-childbirth-texas-not-so-much/>

55 Central Intelligence Agency, “Maternal Mortality Rate: Country Comparison Ranking,” *The World Factbook*, 2017, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/353.html>

56 Joanna Stańczak, Karina Stelmach, and Magdalena Urbanowicz, “Over 20 % of Births in Poland Are Births outside Marriage,” Eurostat, November 2015, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:Marriages\\_and\\_births\\_in\\_Poland](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:Marriages_and_births_in_Poland)

57 Euraxess Poland, Research in Motion, “Family and Pregnancy,” n.d., <https://www.euraxess.pl/poland/information-assistance/family-pregnancy>

58 Expat Focus, “Giving Birth in Poland as an Expat,” 24 July 2015, [https://www.expatsfocus.com/poland/health/giving-birth-in-poland-as-an-expat-2150?gclid=CjwKCAjwsMzzBRACEiwAx4ILGzbProZusErTPI7RyOHYVu7N3G5zCJANA0fgLMYglUApJrJev6ITcxoCx3sQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.expatsfocus.com/poland/health/giving-birth-in-poland-as-an-expat-2150?gclid=CjwKCAjwsMzzBRACEiwAx4ILGzbProZusErTPI7RyOHYVu7N3G5zCJANA0fgLMYglUApJrJev6ITcxoCx3sQAvD_BwE)

59 Marissa Evans, “In Poland, Midwives Play a Significant Role in Childbirth. In Texas? Not So Much,” Texas Tribune, 3 July 2018, <https://www.texastribune.org/2018/07/03/poland-midwives-play-significant-role-childbirth-texas-not-so-much/>

## Family Social Events: Weddings, Birthdays, and Funerals

Family events such as baptism, communion, confirmation, marriage, and death are celebrated or observed in churches and are based on a unique mixture of Slavic, Jewish, and Catholic beliefs and practices.<sup>60</sup>

### Weddings

Polish wedding ceremonies are often held in a church. The most popular months to marry are those with the letter R (March, June, August, September, October, and December) because they bring good luck. The church ceremony, called *ślub*, is usually held on a Saturday afternoon. As in Catholic ceremonies elsewhere, women pledge service and obedience to their husbands, although they do not always mean it. The couple selects two witnesses and invites mostly family members and very close friends. When the newlywed couple exits the church, the guests shower them with coins.<sup>61, 62</sup>

Many superstitions used to accompany wedding ceremonies. For example, if one of the two candles went out, it meant that either the bride or the groom would die young. Tradition also dictates that brides never wear open-toe shoes or real pearls as they would bring a lifetime of misery and misfortune. Today such traditions have nearly disappeared.<sup>63, 64</sup>

The wedding reception (*wesele*) begins with the presentation of bread and salt. The bread is often decorated with the names of the bride and groom, and is offered as a good omen that the couple will not know hunger; the salt reminds them that life can be difficult. During the traditional toast, a glass of vodka and a glass of water are offered to the bride. If she chooses the vodka, she will be the dominant partner in the marriage. After the toast, the couple throws the glasses behind their backs and if the glasses break, it is a sign of good luck. Most gifts are in the form of cash. Wedding registries are not very common.<sup>65, 66, 67</sup>

The wedding reception can last up to 12 hours. Guests feast on multiple courses and vodka flows throughout the night. The presentation of the wedding cake is similar to other cultures—the bride and groom cut the first piece and feed each other.<sup>68</sup>

The *oczepiny* ritual of the unveiling of the bride is an old custom that persists today. At midnight, the bride removes her veil or bouquet and tosses it into a group of single women. Once the veil is removed the bride officially becomes a married woman. The groom tosses his tie to the single male guests. Those who catch the garments will marry, but not necessarily each other. After the ritual, guests commonly play adult-themed wedding games.<sup>69, 70</sup>

60 Dagmara Staga, “7 Weird Polish Funeral Customs,” Culture.pl, 28 October 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/7-weird-polish-funeral-customs>

61 Culture.pl, “A Foreigner’s Guide to Polish Weddings,” 6 July 2013, <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-weddings>

62 Delicious Poland, “6 Things You Must Know about Polish Wedding,” 19 June 2017, <https://www.deliciouspoland.com/blog/6-things-you-must-know-about-polish-wedding>

63 Culture.pl, “A Foreigner’s Guide to Polish Weddings,” 6 July 2013, <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-weddings>

64 Sasha Vasilyuk, “Polish Weddings: Then & Now,” Culture.pl, 21 June 2017, <https://culture.pl/en/article/polish-weddings-then-now>

65 Culture.pl, “A Foreigner’s Guide to Polish Weddings,” 6 July 2013, <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-weddings>

66 Delicious Poland, “6 Things You Must Know about Polish Wedding,” 19 June 2017, <https://www.deliciouspoland.com/blog/6-things-you-must-know-about-polish-wedding>

67 Dagmara Staga, “Polish Wedding Customs and Traditions,” Partners on the Road, 27 February 2019, <https://partnersontheroad.com/2019/01/17/polish-wedding-customs-and-traditions/>

68 Culture.pl, “A Foreigner’s Guide to Polish Weddings,” 6 July 2013, <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-weddings>

69 Culture.pl, “A Foreigner’s Guide to Polish Weddings,” 6 July 2013, <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-weddings>

70 Wojciech Oleksiak, “7 Confusing Polish Customs,” Culture.pl, 23 April 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/7-confusing-polish-customs>

Some weddings last two days. The second day (*poprawiny*), usually on a Sunday, starts with an afternoon lunch or a barbecue, followed by dancing and drinking until late evening. This day is less formal.<sup>71, 72</sup>

Today, urban couples tend to get married later in life and often pay for the wedding on their own. Many couples also abandon traditional wedding celebrations and choose to get married in cities or abroad in smaller, less traditional Western-style weddings.<sup>73</sup>

## Birthdays

Poles celebrate birthdays and name days, which are the calendar dates for their patron saints. The Christine name day on 13 March is popular because many women are named Christie. St. Martin Day is celebrated on 11 November and the St. Andrzej (Andrew) name day is celebrated on 29 November. In Upper Silesia, the St. Barbórka (Barbara, patron for miners) name day is celebrated on 4 December. People who celebrate name days get flowers and sometimes a small gift.<sup>74</sup>

Birthday celebrations are changing with the times. Traditional parties are held in the evening at home, a restaurant, or other public locations with family and friends. Women receive flowers and a gift while men receive a bottle of wine or liquor. It is also becoming popular to give money and cards. People toast champagne and sing songs wishing long life to the person celebrating the birthday. The host serves plates of cold foods, fruit, coffee, and cakes. The birthday cake is decorated with candles.<sup>75</sup>

First birthdays are celebrated mainly at Upper Silesia. The celebrants go to a special Mass with the one-year-old child dressed in white; a wreath of myrtle decorates girls' heads while boys wear it on their wrist. After Mass, the priest blesses the child and the godparents.<sup>76</sup>

## Funerals

There are several unique Polish traditions regarding funerals. It was customary to open the windows and doors to let the deceased's soul go to Heaven. Some families put a coin in the deceased's mouth or hand to take to the afterlife. During the three-day wake (*pusta noc*), mourners prayed and wailed to keep the evil spirits away. Someone stayed with the body to protect it from harm and during the night lit a candle. Food and drinks were left by the body. In two customs with Jewish origins, people used to cover their mirrors with a cloth and stop the clocks in the house. Since the color white is a mourning symbol in Poland, funeral flowers have to be white. Calla lilies and chrysanthemums are the most common funeral flowers.<sup>77, 78</sup>

Most Polish funerals follow Roman Catholic traditions but customs are changing with the times. Today, the night before the funeral, the family gathers at a funeral home. The next morning, the coffin is brought to the sitting room of the funeral home for a final visit. The priest and the closest relatives of the deceased pray and bless the

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71 Jonny Blair, "Top 6 Tips to Survive a Polish Wedding," Culture Trip, 27 September 2017, <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/poland/articles/top-6-tips-to-survive-a-polish-wedding/>

72 Delicious Poland, "6 Things You Must Know about Polish Wedding," 19 June 2017, <https://www.deliciouspoland.com/blog/6-things-you-must-know-about-polish-wedding>

73 Sasha Vasilyuk, "Polish Weddings: Then & Now," Culture.pl, 21 June 2017, <https://culture.pl/en/article/polish-weddings-then-now>

74 Polish Dictionary, "Birthday in Poland," n.d., <https://polish-dictionary.com/poland-birthday-party>

75 Polish Dictionary, "Birthday in Poland," n.d., <https://polish-dictionary.com/poland-birthday-party>

76 Dorota Rancew-Sikora and Łukasz Remisiewicz, "A candle to blow out: An analysis of first birthday family celebrations," *Journal of Pragmatics*, 158 (March 2020): 53-65. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2019.12.008>

77 Jenny Goldade, "Cultural Spotlight: Polish Funeral Traditions," Frazer Consultants, 21 September 2017, <https://www.frazerconsultants.com/2017/09/cultural-spotlight-polish-funeral-traditions/>

78 Dagmara Staga, "7 Weird Polish Funeral Customs," Culture.pl, 28 October 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/7-weird-polish-funeral-customs>



departed and the mourners. As the casket leaves the threshold, the pallbearers touch the coffin three times. The casket then lies in state at the church, surrounded by candles, flowers, and wreaths. Mourners and the priest celebrate the deceased's life with eulogies, homilies, a Mass, prayers, and songs. A hearse then takes the coffin to the cemetery as the priests read prayers and sing songs. At the gravesite, the coffin is buried while mourners throw dirt onto the grave, pray, and offer their goodbyes. The headstone usually has a birch cross engraved with the deceased's name, lifespan, and a prayer. After the funeral, mourners gather at the family's home for a somber feast. Typically, mourners drink vodka with honey. The family also organizes a feast on the first anniversary of the death. Although not common, cremation is becoming more popular.<sup>79, 80</sup>

## Naming Conventions

### *Given Names*

The original Polish names were Slavic in origin. In the 16th century, the Council of Trent imposed a ban on pagan names and Slavic first names became virtually extinct. Today, only a few Slavic names, mostly of saints, survive, such as Kazimierz, Stanisław, and Wojciech.<sup>81</sup>

Polish masculine names end with a consonant whereas feminine names end with an -a. Many names entered Polish from the Latin, German, Lithuanian, or Russian languages. The most common Christian names are Piotr, Łukasz, Andrzej, and Grzegorz for males and Agnieszka (Agnes), Małgorzata (Margaret), or Katarzyna for females. Tadeusz entered Polish from Latin, Jadwiga from German, and Grażyna from Lithuanian.<sup>82</sup>

### *Surnames*

Polish surnames suggest social, ethnic, and cultural affiliations. Originally, they belonged to one of three categories. Cognominal surnames, which are created from a nickname, are usually based on occupation or a physical or character trait. Examples are Kowal (blacksmith), Woźniak (custodian), Kucharski (cook), Biały (white), Bystróż (quick-witted), and Noga (leg). Eponymic surnames, such as Brzeziński from Brzezina, describe the birthplace of a person, their place of residence, or their family's origin. Patronymic surnames, such as Piotrowicz or Staszczyk, use a person's given name and end with a suffix that shows the family's surname. As Christian names began to replace Slavic names in the 16th century, more surnames were introduced, with more varieties. For example, Piotr (Peter) became Pietrasz, Pietraszak, Pietraszek, Pietruszko, and Petrulewicz, using a version of the popular suffix -wicz, which indicates being someone's son.<sup>83</sup>

Surnames with the -ski suffix and the cognate -cki and -dzki are among the most popular Polish names and were used by Polish nobility, which comprised about 10% of the population when the custom began, around the 13th century. They signify that their bearers come from a certain place, such as Tarnowski from Tarnów and Chomętowski from Chomętów. In the 16th century, the suffix was adopted by the broader population and

79 Robert John Zagar and Agata Karolina Szkotak Zagar, "A Modern Polish Funeral: February 2014," Polish News, February 2014, <https://www.polishnews.com/a-modern-polish-funeral-february-2014>

80 Jenny Goldade, "Cultural Spotlight: Polish Funeral Traditions," Frazer Consultants, 21 September 2017, <https://www.frazerconsultants.com/2017/09/cultural-spotlight-polish-funeral-traditions/>

81 Mikołaj Gliński, "Language and Literature—A Foreigner's Guide to Polish Names," Culture.pl, 26 August 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-names>

82 Mikołaj Gliński, "Language and Literature—A Foreigner's Guide to Polish Names," Culture.pl, 26 August 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-names>

83 Mikołaj Gliński, "Language and Literature—A Foreigner's Guide to Polish Surnames," Culture.pl, 8 January 2016, <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-surnames>

combined with other naming conventions. So, Skowron (lark) became Skowroński, Ryba (fish) became Rybiński, Kaczmarek (innkeeper) became Kaczmarski, and Kowal (blacksmith) became Kowalski.<sup>84</sup>

Many Polish surnames were adopted from other languages such as Belarusian, Armenian, Tatar, Ukrainian, and German. Polish Jews were given surnames by the authorities that administered the territories in which they lived, especially in areas controlled by Austria and Prussia.<sup>85</sup>

Unmarried women used their fathers' surname with the suffix *-ówna* or *-anka*, such as *Kordziakówna* from *Kordziak*, or *Morawianka* from *Morawa*. A woman's surname often differed from that of her husband or father, most prominent in surnames like *Kowalski*, when the wife's name is *Kowalska*. Other last names for married women or widows used the husband's surname and had the suffix *-owa*, *-na*, or *-yna*, as in *Nowak* and *Nowakowa*, *Koba* and *Kobina*. This tradition was part of older folk usage and is quickly disappearing.<sup>86</sup>

## **Nicknames**

Nicknames can be somewhat confusing, as they don't always correspond with given names. For example, *Ola* is a nickname for *Aleksandra*, and *Lolek* for *Karol*. Some first names, such as *Paweł*, *Szymon*, *Mikołaj*, and *Marta*, are left unchanged.<sup>87</sup>

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84 Mikołaj Gliški, "Language and Literature—A Foreigner's Guide to Polish Surnames," Culture.pl, 8 January 2016, <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-surnames>

85 Mikołaj Gliški, "Language and Literature—A Foreigner's Guide to Polish Surnames," Culture.pl, 8 January 2016, <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-surnames>

86 Mikołaj Gliški, "Language and Literature—A Foreigner's Guide to Polish Surnames," Culture.pl, 8 January 2016, <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-surnames>

87 Mikołaj Gliški, "Language and Literature—A Foreigner's Guide to Polish Names," Culture.pl, 26 August 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-names>

# Polish Cultural Orientation

## Chapter 6 | Family Life, Assessment

Read the following statements and answer True or False

1. Poland recognizes religious or traditional marriage ceremonies.  True  False
2. Divorce is still illegal in Poland due to the strong influence of the Catholic Church.  True  False
3. Polish women have no access to paid maternity or parental leave.  True  False
4. The *oczepiny* is an old Polish wedding ritual that takes place at midnight in which the bride removes her veil.  True  False
5. Some Polish funeral traditions have a Jewish origin.  True  False

# Polish Cultural Orientation

## Chapter 6 | Family Life, Assessment Answers

1. True:  
Poland recognizes marriage ceremonies performed according to tradition and religion. These marriages are called “concordat marriages” and do not require a separate civil marriage. Only certain churches are allowed to register marriages with the civil registry office.
2. False:  
Divorce is legal in Poland but relatively uncommon. According to the law, cheating, violence, addiction, poor relationship with the family, desertion, idleness, and disloyalty are all considered grounds for divorce.
3. False:  
Women usually go on maternity leave during the second half of their pregnancy. The duration of maternity leave totals 20 weeks and can be extended to parental leave for another 26 weeks after the child is born.
4. True:  
The *oczepiny* wedding ritual takes place at midnight, when the bride removes her veil (or in modern weddings her bouquet) and tosses it into a group of single women. Once the veil is removed, the bride officially becomes a married woman.
5. True:  
Poles adopted two funeral traditions from their Jewish neighbors. Traditionally, when people died, Poles covered the mirrors with a cloth and stopped the clocks in the house.

# Polish Cultural Orientation

## Further Readings and Resources

### *Articles and Websites*

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# Polish Cultural Orientation

## Final Assessment

Read the following statements and answer True or False

1. Trains are a primary means of traveling between cities in Poland.  True  False
  
2. In Poland, the concept of time is very flexible. Punctuality is not expected outside of the business environment.  True  False
  
3. Poland is trying to keep its rich farmland from being purchased by buyers from other EU countries.  True  False
  
4. Poland's economy is declining because of poor transportation infrastructure, stifling bureaucracy, and a cumbersome tax system.  True  False
  
5. Many Polish surnames are based on occupation or physical and character traits.  True  False
  
6. After the fall of communism in 1989, the city of Warsaw began handing properties that were seized after World War II back to their previous owners or the owners' heirs.  True  False
  
7. Homosexuality is illegal in Poland.  True  False
  
8. Wheat, rye, buckwheat, and barley are the most important dietary staples in Poland.  True  False
  
9. Rural Poland has a robust public bus system that connects small towns and villages with service to large urban centers. Many Orthodox churches in Bulgaria do not have seats or pews.  True  False

10. Lech Wałęsa was Poland's popular president who died in a plane crash in 2010.  True  False
11. The legal marriage age in Poland is 18.  True  False
12. Krakow is one of Poland's most polluted cities.  True  False
13. Wadowice is the nickname for the beloved Saint Władysław, who was king of Poland in the 12th century.  True  False
14. Poland's national dish is a rich stew made with bacon, pork, and cabbage, among other ingredients.  True  False
15. Rural Poles do not put stock in professional medical advice, preferring instead to rely on folk remedies.  True  False
16. Freedom of the press, guaranteed by Poland's constitution, is generally respected by the government.  True  False
17. Poland has one of the lowest maternal mortality rates in the world.  True  False
18. Poland relies on a combination of natural gas and geothermal energy for most of its electricity production.  True  False
19. The Basilica of Our Lady of Licheń is Poland's largest church.  True  False
20. Poles are often honest and open about their emotions and opinions.  True  False
21. Poles must pass through customs checkpoints when traveling to any of Poland's EU neighbors.  True  False



22. Poland's German minority is concentrated in the southwest.  True  False
23. The PiS-led government uses monetary benefits to encourage women to have more babies.  True  False
24. Kapliczka, which means a little chapel, is the Polish term for a roadside shrine.  True  False
25. Poles eat breakfast twice a day.  True  False
26. Every year thousands of unexploded World War II-era mines and grenades are found and dismantled in Poland.  True  False
27. The Katyn Massacre refers to the mass execution of hundreds of Polish political prisoners by the Nazis in a field near Lublin.  True  False
28. PiS opposes the European Union's accession to the Istanbul Convention, which aims to prevent violence against women.  True  False
29. Communist-era apartments contain designated children's playrooms, in keeping with the regime's family-centric policies.  True  False
30. The Catholic Church in Poland refuses to address clerical sex abuse.  True  False

# Polish Cultural Orientation

## Final Assessment Answers

1. True:  
A variety of services is available, from comfortable high-speed trains that connect major cities to slower regional trains that stop at every station. Longer routes offer dining and sleeping cars.
2. False:  
Punctuality is expected and is very important to Poles. Being late is considered bad manners. It is important to explain the circumstances that caused tardiness.
3. True:  
In 2016, the government passed a law restricting farmland ownership rights. Prospective purchasers of farmland had to be qualified farmers, live nearby for five years, and pledge to personally work the land.
4. False:  
Poland is the European Union's sixth-largest economy. The country's remarkable economic growth has earned it the nickname "European Tiger."
5. True:  
Examples of this practice include: Kowalski, meaning blacksmith; Woźniak, meaning custodian; Krawczyk, meaning tailor; and Szewczyk, meaning shoemaker.
6. True:  
Warsaw's "reprivatization" process has seen city-owned buildings housing 17,000 residents in often rent-controlled apartments be transferred to private ownership. Other restored plots of land were in the middle of parks or playgrounds.
7. False:  
The majority of Poles oppose same-sex marriage and adoption of children by same-sex couples, but homosexuality is legal and attitudes toward LGBT rights are changing. Poland's first openly gay lawmaker was elected in 2011.
8. True:  
These food staples are used in bread, noodles, dumplings, soups, and various side dishes.
9. False:  
Since 1989, many bus routes that served Poland's rural areas have been canceled because they were too expensive to operate. About 26% of the villages in Poland have no bus connections to bigger towns or cities.
10. False:  
Lech Wałęsa, the leader of the Solidarity labor union, became Poland's first democratically elected president in 1990. President Lech Kaczyński died in a plane crash in 2010.

11. True:  
The legal age for marriage is 18; however, it is technically possible for 16-year-olds to marry with judicial approval.
12. True:  
Breathing the city's polluted air for a year is equivalent to smoking 3,000 cigarettes. Many residents have become accustomed to wearing masks and checking air pollution levels daily.
13. False:  
Wadowice is the hometown of Pope John Paul II. Every year, thousands of pilgrims come to Wadowice to see the apartment building (now a museum) where the pope lived as a boy.
14. True:  
The national dish of Poland is bigos, known as hunter's stew. It is made with cabbage, sauerkraut, sausage, bacon, pork, and mushrooms.
15. False:  
While folk remedies abound, Poles trust scientific medicine and follow doctors' orders and prescriptions.
16. False:  
Since PiS came to power in 2015, control of the Polish media has become a part of its effort to remake Poland along conservative lines. State-owned outlets often broadcast content deemed hateful, xenophobic, or anti-Semitic.
17. True:  
Poland registered two deaths per 100,000 births in 2017, one of the lowest maternal mortality rates in the world.
18. False:  
Nearly all of the country's electricity is produced by antiquated coal-fired plants. Poland produces around 86% of the European Union's coal.
19. True:  
The Basilica of Our Lady of Licheń in Licheń Stary is the largest church in Poland and the 12th largest church in the world. The largest organ in Poland is located in one of the complex's five chapels.
20. True:  
Poles feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, often loudly and with humor, even when they differ. They do not see disagreements as a barrier to personal rapport.
21. False:  
Poland has been a part of Europe's visa-free Schengen zone since 2007 and its citizens can cross the borders freely into neighboring EU countries.
22. True:  
Silesia and Opole in southwestern Poland have traditionally been home to a German minority. Competing German and Polish influences have led to the development of a unique Silesian culture.

23. True:  
The government provides families with an allowance of about USD 117 for each child every month in an effort to help heterosexual couples and their biological children.
24. True:  
There are hundreds of roadside crosses and shrines called kapliczka in Poland. The shrines express gratitude or request mercy or protection. Some are used as markers of village boundaries.
25. True:  
Breakfast (śniadanie'), eaten around 8 a.m., consists of coffee or tea, bread with cold cuts or sausage, tomatoes, and eggs. "Second breakfast" (drugie śniadanie), eaten between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., consists of bread with sausage, sandwiches with pickles, eggs, and cheese.
26. True:  
Experts say it may take up to 200 years to discover and destroy all the leftover ordnance from World War II.
27. False:  
The Katyn Massacre refers to the mass execution in 1940 of 22,000 Polish officers and soldiers by Soviets in the Katyn Forest in the Soviet Union.
28. True:  
*PiS claims that Polish women are treated better than women in other countries and that the convention represents harmful gender ideology.*
29. False:  
A typical apartment in Poland is usually very small, with limited areas for play and recreation. Aside from a bathroom and kitchen, there may be only two or three rooms for living space.
30. False:  
In 2019, the church revealed that it had hundreds of records of priests and victims spanning three decades. It promised to investigate the abuse, improve awareness, and train clergy in prevention and counseling.