



RESEARCH REPORT
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Democracy without Minorities

The relationship between minorities
and populism in Poland and Hungary

ENoP
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POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS

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PREFACE

Anna Donáth, MEP

In 2022, minorities around the world faced significant challenges as events tested the foundations of our democracy. While the Russian invasion of Ukraine was met with resistance from democratic countries, which have remained committed to upholding democratic values, many minority groups even within these countries faced and are still facing ongoing issues of discrimination and marginalisation. Despite the show of unity in support of democratic values, the situation for minorities remained dire in many countries, as illiberal policies and a rise of far-right leaders threatened their basic rights and participation in the democratic processes.

In Hungary, the Fidesz government has targeted many minority groups over the past 12 years through the use of derogatory narratives against the Roma population and refugees, criminalisation of homelessness, restriction of the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community, and failure to address issues faced by women, individuals with disabilities and other marginalised groups. Similarly, in Poland the ruling party has implemented policies, such as the near-total ban on abortion, that disproportionately affect minorities. The removal or restriction of constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties through illiberal policies allows these governing parties to manipulate vulnerable groups for political gain and undermine liberal democracy and the rule of law through unchecked rule by the majority.

Despite these challenges, there were notable successes for democracy in 2022, such as the defeat of Bolsonaro in Brazil and Marine Le Pen in France. Also, in the United Kingdom Rishi Sunak was elected as the first prime minister of colour. However, these positive developments were overshadowed by the rise of far-right leaders in Italy, Denmark and Sweden and the persistence of illiberal regimes in Hungary and Poland. While we may still be far from the ideal, we must strive towards a future where all individuals, regardless of their identities, are protected and able to fully participate in the democratic process.

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Introduction to the publication

Milosz Hodun, PHD

Democracy and human rights are two sides of the same coin. This is particularly important from the point of view of minorities. Democracy welded with human rights prevents it from turning into a dictate of the majority, and includes the imperative to protect every single individual. Guaranteeing the rights of minorities is a prerequisite for the healthy development of democracy, one that allows for the free exchange of ideas and the formation of opinions, protects a fair electoral process, and allows for broad support for the system as such and for key decisions of those in power.

Unfortunately, for minorities guarantees of rights, and even respect, are not taken for granted. Either in all countries that call themselves democratic, or even among members of the European Union. Politicians fascinated by authoritarianisms of various sorts exclude minorities from the community, making no secret of the fact that they rule thanks to and in the interests of a particular majority (often only the relative majority that won a parliamentary majority due to the nature of the electoral system). Moreover, acting shortsightedly – as populists do – they deliberately and systematically fight individual minorities. They point to minorities as enemies of the state, the nation and the society... It is on minorities that the attention of majority groups is focused, as they are blamed for the failures of those in power. They are perfidiously exploited in the process of deepening polarisation aimed at mobilising voters and gaining power or prolonging being in power.

Poland and Hungary are the experimental ground for creating new forms of democracy in Europe. The leaders of both countries, Jarosław Kaczyński and his Law and Justice (PiS) party and Viktor Orbán and his Fidesz party, have made no secret of the fact that they are fed up with European values and want to create a system far from the Copenhagen criteria. Orbán talks about ‘illiberal democracy’, and Kaczyński – about ‘real democracy’. In both of these visions – which are similar and mutually inspiring – democracy is limited to participation in elections once every few years. The tri-partite

division of power, the rule of law and the independent media are disappearing. Minorities are also disappearing.

The actions of the Law and Justice and Fidesz are textbook examples of treating minorities like an object to achieve current political goals. The unprecedented attack on migrants and refugees has served right-wing populists in Warsaw and Budapest to seize and consolidate power. When they realised that the division of society into 'us and them' and the ruthless assault on 'them' was bringing notable benefits, they invented more groups to become victims of the witch-hunt by the party and the state. Both parties have hit out at the LGBTQI community using similar narratives. The Law and Justice, with the help of the Church and conservative allies, has carried out an assault on women's rights, and has taken advantage of its president's phobias by constructing narratives targeting Germans and Silesians. Fidesz was not afraid to touch a racist note when it talked about racial purity in the context of the Hungarian Roma. When it was useful, both parties exploited anti-Semitism and stoked resentment against Jews.

This publication addresses each of the aforementioned minority groups. Authors from Poland and Hungary describe how right-wing populists attacked particular groups and what the consequences were. Aleksandra Janowska of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung writes about the assault on women's rights and feminist activism. Zsuzsa Kelen of the Political Capital Institute compared anti-LGBTQI and anti-gender narratives in both countries, citing the most prominent examples of government action. Dominik Héjj of the Institute of Central Europe and Daniel Mikecz of the Republikon Institute focused on campaigns targeting migrants and refugees. Edit Zgut-Przybylska of Visegrad Insight pointed out the similarities and differences in the way Fidesz and the Law and Justice fuel and exploit resentment towards national and ethnic minorities in their political activities. Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz of the Centre of Migration Research at the University of Warsaw and Michał P. Garapich of the University of Roehampton described how populism in Central Europe continues to feed on anti-Gypsyism, and Piotr Kwapisiewicz of the Jewish Association Czulent pointed out the consequences of politicising anti-Semitism.

Each analysis is followed by an interview that reporter Joanna Łopat conducted with a minority representative or a person involved in helping minorities in Poland or Hungary. Joanna Łopat interviewed people who have been directly affected by systemic discrimination and hate speech by those in power, as well as those who dedicate their lives to fighting for better treatment of vulnerable groups. Interviewees include a Roma

activist, a married gay couple whose relationship is not recognized in the country, and a woman who experienced first-hand the consequences of a Polish Constitutional Court ruling that led to an almost total ban on abortion.

The second part of this publication is the report ‘The Situation of Women and Sexual and Gender Minorities in Contemporary Poland’, drawn up on the basis of a quantitative CAWI survey and a series of in-depth interviews with representatives of women’s organisations and LGBTQ+ people in January 2023. The authors of the report, Maciej Milewicz, Klaudia Rodziejczak and Miłosz Hodun of Fundacja Projekt: Polska (‘Project: Poland’ Foundation) write that attitudes toward the future of the LGBTQ+ community in Poland are ambivalent. Emotions of sadness and fear dominate. Respondents do not expect any significant changes in the law or the mentality of the heteronormative majority. They do, however, pin their hopes on an improvement in the situation if there were a change in government and as a result of social organisations and activists.

Enjoy the read.



CHAPTER I

WOMEN

ACTION AND REACTION

ASSAULT ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Aleksandra Janowska

Women's reproductive rights in Poland and their consistent restriction have been part of a vicious political struggle for years, which harms women and the rest of society.

In November 2022, a hearing was held in the European Parliament on the effects of Poland's abortion regulations. It was attended by the family of Izabela Sajbor from Pszczyna, Silesia Province, Poland¹. A 30-year-old woman reported to the hospital in September 2021 for leakage of amniotic fluid. Doctors waited to intervene medically until the fetus died for fear of legal liability for illegal abortion. Izabela Sajbor died as a result of sepsis, orphaning her 9-year-old daughter. The woman is considered the first fatality of Poland's abortion law, which has a chilling effect on the medical profession.

According to the data presented at the European Parliament by attorney Kamila Ferenc, who works with the Foundation for Women and Family Planning, at least six women have died in Poland since October 2020. Then, a controversial Constitutional Court ruling tightened the already restrictive 1993 abortion law. According to Polish NGOs, current regulations also negatively affect the situation of patients in gynaecology and obstetrics wards, the availability of prenatal testing and contraception. Women's concern is caused by the obligation, introduced in 2022, for medical personnel to add pregnancy information to the electronic Patient Card, which the Health Ministry claims is a result of European Commission requirements. Activists say it's a pregnancy registry and fear that in a country that does not provide access to abortion, the data will be used to increase pressure on pregnant people.

1 Baure-Babef, C. (2022, November 18). Polen wegen de-facto Abtreibungsverbot in der Kritik. *Euroactiv.com*. <https://www.euractiv.de/section/gesundheit/news/polen-wegen-de-facto-abtreibungsverbot-in-der-kritik/>

Since the victory of the right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) party in the 2015 parliamentary elections, attacks on women's rights and the LGBTQIA+ community have been gaining momentum. At the same time, new forms of feminist resistance are forming. Back in the fall of 2016, the Polish parliament began proceeding with a civic legislative initiative introducing a total ban on abortion, while rejecting a bill on women's rights liberalizing abortion laws. A nationwide social movement was forming, initially under the name Black Protest, in protest against plans to further restrict access to legal and safe abortion. It gave rise to the Polish Women's Strike, which called for a mass protest on 3 October 2016. Assemblies were held that day in 147 Polish towns and cities, supported by allies in 60 cities abroad².

Turning point

A turning point for the feminist movements in Poland was the 22 October 2020 verdict of the Constitutional Court, which ruled that laws allowing the termination of pregnancy due to embryopathological diagnosis were in breach of the Polish Constitution. The pressure to change the abortion law came from the right-wing government, which used the politicized Constitutional Court to do so. Since the publication of the ruling on 27 January 2022, legal abortion is allowed only in two cases – when the pregnancy poses a threat to the woman's life or health, or there is a reasonable suspicion that the pregnancy is the result of a criminal act, such as rape. A woman who terminates her own pregnancy is not subject to criminal liability, those who assist in an abortion face up to three years in prison. Given that the majority of abortions within the framework of the national health service have been carried out on the basis of embryopathological diagnosis, demonstrating fetal damage, inability of the fetus to live outside the uterus and other lethal defects, the Constitutional Court's ruling is tantamount to effectively closing the path to legal abortion. According to the Polish Ministry of Health, by 2020 there were about a thousand abortions a year. In 2021, legal abortion was performed in 107 cases³. Most abortions take place outside the official system, for example, using drugs sent by international NGOs, or in foreign clinics.

2 Urzędowska, D., Suchomska, J. (2020). *Feministki w sieci. Nowe media w działaniach przeciwko ograniczeniu praw kobiet w Polsce. Dyskurs&Dialog* <http://dyskursdialog.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/1.pdf>.

3 Federa (2022, August 1). Ministerstwo Zdrowia: 107 aborcji ustawowych w Polsce w 2021. <https://federa.org.pl/dane-mz-aborcje-2021/>

Thousands of people already took to the streets on the day the Constitutional Court's verdict was announced. According to official police figures, 410 protests took place on Wednesday, 28 October alone, with more than 400,000 participants⁴. Feminist initiatives like the Polish Women's Strike again played a key organizational role. The verdict on the so-called abortion law has become a symbol of the appropriation of state institutions and attempts to politically subordinate the judiciary to the ruling party. The demonstrations turned into weeks-long protests formulating political demands that went beyond reproductive rights. It is estimated that it was one of the largest public protests since the Polish democratic transition in 1989. Young people actively participated in them, which distinguished those protests from previous acts of opposition to the rule of Law and Justice, for example, in defence of the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary. According to opinion polls, 29% of people in the 18–24 age group declared their participation in protests in the final months of 2020 and early 2021.

Sociologist Elżbieta Korolczuk, analysing the new language of feminist protest, wrote 'young people are rebelling against a reality that is deeply hierarchical, whether in terms of age, sexuality or gender [...] This generation has a strong sense of exclusion from public debate, a sense of a stolen future – hence the strong words and slogans, the uncompromisingness also in the visual sphere'⁵. The researchers pointed out that the protests after announcement of the Constitutional Court's verdict continued not only the tradition of liberal feminism, but also referred to a variety of protest practices that formed after 1989 outside the framework set by established NGOs – such as queer protests, Manifas (feminist demonstrations held in various Polish cities on 8 March), nurses' strikes, protests by tenant associations or farmers' blockades⁶.

Shrinking area of freedom

The increasing intensity of policies that are repressive against women is not a specifically Polish phenomenon, but the feminist protests after 2016 made its local context

4 Januszewska, P., Szafrński, J. (2020, November 28). Już żadnej z nas nie zawstydzicie! Reportaż z polskich ulic. *Krytyka Polityczna*. <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kraj/paulina-januszewska-juz-zadnej-z-nas-nie-zawstydzicie-reportaz/>

5 Korolczuk, E. Bunt Młodych. In Kosiewski, P. (ed.) (2021). *Język Rewolucji*. Warsaw: Batory Foundation, pp. 71–72. <https://www.batory.org.pl/2021/03/11/jezyk-rewolucji/>.

6 Szcześniak, M. Koniec dziadecenu. In Kosiewski, P. (ed.) (2021). *Język Rewolucji*. Warsaw: Batory Foundation, pp. 99–100. <https://www.batory.org.pl/2021/03/11/jezyk-rewolucji/>

clear. Demonstrations were also held in smaller towns and allowed people experiencing several dimensions of discrimination at the same time, such as refugee women, migrant women, women living in rural areas, women working on farms, mothers who function independently, mothers of children with disabilities, or women caring for other dependents, to have their voices heard. Reflection on the fact that inequality affects different people and groups in a different way began to take up more and more space. The Feminist Fund's report 'There is Oppression – there is Resistance' points to the multitude of feminist initiatives in Poland responding to specific problems that affect local communities⁷. In this context, the co-authors of the report write about the shift away from the pedagogical/expert model in feminism to everyday activism and articulation of the multiplicity of different forms of exclusion: '[...] knowledge, experience and feminist values do not flow only from the centre, from educated people, feminist elites. Their sources also come from local communities (rural feminism) or communities hitherto marginalized in feminism (transgender people, people with disabilities, teenagers) whose expertise had not been recognized before'⁸.

The feminist protests – from Black Monday on 3 October 2016, to the demonstrations following the death of Izabela Sajbor in Pszczyna – also demonstrated the challenges Polish civil society is currently facing. On the very first day of protests after the Constitutional Court verdict, 15 people were detained⁹. Adam Bodnar, the Ombudsman at the time, was concerned about the use of coercive measures against demonstrators, pointing to citizens' right to spontaneous assembly¹⁰. Footage of the protests circulated on social media documented arbitrary detentions and the use of excessive force by police officers against peaceful demonstrators, such as the unjustified spraying of pepper spray. International NGOs have raised the alarm that Polish state services do not comply with standards on freedom of assembly¹¹. Using the example of the feminist protests, it is becoming apparent that in view of the ongoing crisis of the rule of law, the space in which Polish civil society can operate is shrinking. Feminist activists are, among other things, becoming targets of SLAPP (*strategic lawsuits against public participation*) attacks because of their social and political activities.

7 Grabowska, M., et al. (ed.) (2022). *Jest opresja, jest opór*. Warsaw: Feminist Fund Report. <https://femfund.pl/raport/>.

8 Grabowska, M., et al. (ed.) (2022), p. 16.

9 BIP RPO (2020, November 14). Protesty społeczne w dniu wyroku TK ws. aborcji. Policja podsumowała swe działania <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpo-protesty-w-dniu-wyroku-ws-aborcji-podsumowanie-ksp>

10 BIP RPO (2020, November 14).

11 Amnesty International Polska (2020, November 20). *Polska: Uczestnicy bezprecedensowej fali protestów w całym kraju powinni być chronieni, a nie atakowani*. <https://amnesty.org.pl/polska-uczestnicy-bezprecedensowej-fali-protestow-w-calym-kraju-powinni-byc-chronieni-a-nie-atakowani/>

In 2021, the prosecutor's office charged three leaders of the Polish Women's Strike, Marta Lempart, Klementyna Suchanow and Agnieszka Czeredercka, in connection with the organization of protests after the Constitutional Court verdict announcement. The charges relate to bringing danger to life and health in connection with organizing protests during the COVID-19 pandemic¹².

Justyna Wydrzyńska, an activist and co-founder of ADT (Abortion Dream Team), also appeared before the court. The organization supports women seeking access to safe ways to terminate a pregnancy. Since the announcement of the Constitutional Court ruling in October 2020, ADT claims to have helped 34,000 people. Justyna Wydrzyńska faces up to three years in prison for assisting an abortion, and it's the first such trial against an activist person in Poland¹³. Justyna Wydrzyńska explained that she was contacted by a woman in a violent relationship who wanted to terminate her pregnancy. The activist provided her with her own medications used in medication abortions: 'Since I have the pills for myself, because I can get an unwanted pregnancy, or a wanted pregnancy in which the fetus may be affected by embryopathological defects, and without having the pills I have no other way to do it as soon as possible, I felt I had to help that person because I knew what she was going through. I know violence and how it manifests itself.'¹⁴ The Ordo Iuris Institute for Legal Culture, a conservative foundation working for, among other things, a total ban on abortion, is participating in the proceedings as a social organization. Ordo Iuris' participation in the proceedings could be perceived as an attempt to increase pressure on the court and Justyna Wydrzyńska.

Potential for bottom-up change

In the face of growing pressure on activists, there is an increasing understanding of feminism and the struggle for women's rights as working for a more cohesive and just society. The multiplicity of feminist initiatives in Poland makes their activities sometimes difficult to reduce to a common denominator. However, the potential for grass-roots change that lies in the actions of women activists across the country cannot

12 Szuleka, M., Wolny, M. (2022). *Presja i mobilizacja. Społeczeństwo obywatelskie a kryzys praworządności w latach 2015–2022*. Warsaw: Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, p. 37.

13 Szuleka, M., Wolny, M. (2022).

14 Chrzczonowicz, M. (2022, April 8). Oskarżona o pomoc w aborcji Justyna Wydrzyńska w sądzie: „Musiałam pomóc. Bo znam przemoc”. *OKO.press*. <https://oko.press/oskarzona-o-pomoc-w-aborcji-justyna-wydrzynska-w-sadzie-musialam-pomoc-bo-znam-przemoc>

be overestimated. Feminist activism has already changed the way women's rights are thought about and discussed in Poland. Reproductive rights, and in particular the right to abortion, are one of the central demands of Polish feminist movements. Opinion polls show growing public support for increasing access to legal abortion. But, the goals of activist individuals also incorporate other social and economic issues related to the lack of systemic support for groups of women who are particularly vulnerable to exclusion, and the poor public infrastructure – health care, education, public transportation.

[INTERVIEW]

I’M NOT ASHAMED OF IT, I JUST CAN’T

Joanna Łopat talks with **Anna**, 34 year-old woman
from a small town in southern Poland

Protests against restricting abortion laws in Poland began in March 2018. You were already a mum by then. Were you protesting?

Yes, I took part in the protests. Then and two years later, after the Constitutional Tribunal’s ruling.

In 2020, the judgement was issued, and protests couldn’t change it.

I watched what was happening, and I couldn’t believe it and the way it was introduced. I had the feeling that there was no going back. That as long as the government doesn’t change, protests won’t do anything. It’s hard to back down because, after all, the Tribunal won’t revoke its judgement. But despite everything, manifesting this anger was necessary. It was hard to be indifferent.

Did your friends and relatives support the protests?

The topic of abortion has been the cause of many discussions and arguments, particularly with my dad because he is a staunch supporter of PiS. A die-hard one. But I think, he doesn’t support it, he just won’t say it outright. Because his love for the ruling party and his political predilection do not allow him to criticise any solution introduced by PiS, no matter how stupid.

But my husband was just as concerned as I was. Our friends, relatives, we were all shaken and talked about it a lot. I remember wondering what it would be like if it happened to me.

The ‘what ifs’ have become a reality. You found out you were pregnant not long after the introduction of new regulations, right?

Yes. The judgment was made in October, and I found out about the pregnancy at the end of February. And I wanted this pregnancy. I didn't think that it was risky under these circumstances. It didn't matter. I just wanted another child. Besides, I thought that if something went wrong, it would somehow be possible to sort it out in Poland after all. I was very wrong.

When did you learn that something was wrong?

After the third month of pregnancy, I had an ultrasound, a more specialised one. It is supposed to detect defects. It was done by a very good and well-known doctor. He informed me that one parameter, the nuchal translucency, to be precise, was significantly elevated. But he also pointed out that was not a diagnosis but an indication for more in-depth tests. That's why he ordered a PAPP-A screening test. We had to wait about ten days for the result. During this time, I went to my doctor to consult these results, and with her, I had another blood test. One that shows various diseases with more than 90% accuracy. The waiting time for the result was another two weeks.

What happened between the ultrasound and when you got the results of those specialised blood tests?

I got the final diagnosis ten days after the ultrasound. Those ten days were the worst. I couldn't function normally. I had destructive thoughts. I couldn't focus on work. I couldn't focus on caring for my baby. I was only thinking about it. I was only reading about it. I kept wondering what the chance was that everything was okay after all. I kept checking the percentages and the statistics. I kept hoping that the ultrasound result would not be confirmed.

Unfortunately, it was confirmed. What was the diagnosis?

The PAPP-A test didn't give a detailed answer. It indicates the probability of a given defect. In my case, it was 1:4, which does not mean a 25% risk. In this test, 1:4 means the highest probability of a particular disease the test can show. So, when I got that result, I was already sure. I was just waiting for another confirmation and the result of this second test. This last test confirmed it was trisomy 21, or Down syndrome. Apart from that, other parameters were worrying too.

Did you have any doubts about termination?

I didn't have any doubts at all. And fortunately, nobody in my family had any doubts. That support was important.

And your dad?

When it came down to it, of course, our situation was the unique one. But he never directly criticised the solution. Even though I expected that from him many times.

This is a moment when a woman is alone. Because, after all, no one close to you can help. And even though you need it, the only people who can really help are doctors. And they are scared. What then?

With the ultrasound result, I went straight to the doctor who has been supporting me for years and during my first pregnancy. I could see that she was shocked by the situation. I told her directly that if the diagnosis was confirmed, I wanted to terminate the pregnancy.

What was her reaction?

I think she froze. I was her first such patient since the legislation was introduced. It was the first time she faced what she knew she would have to face at some point. All she said was that I needed to be calm and wait for the results.

What happened next?

Even before I got the results, I checked what my options were. I found out that at that stage of pregnancy in Poland, no one would do it for me in a clinic because if there was bleeding, I would have to go to the hospital. And such a doctor is in deep trouble. The risk is too great. I realised that I can't demand this from Polish doctors because the consequences for them are too great.

When did you make a final decision about going abroad?

I was sure I was going to do it as soon as the results were confirmed. I just didn't know how to go about it. Because, after all, I was going to do something like this in another country, and there's a foreign language, a different healthcare system, and doctors I don't know. After all, it's really a lot. You get scared. I imagined I'd come back in a body bag because I'd gone to a bad doctor.

You went to the Netherlands.

Yes. Once I chose a clinic, I was very relieved. Because I was already acting. Something was already happening, so it became a bit easier for me, although it was still difficult. Afterwards, I felt relieved because it was much better than before. I never felt as bad as I did between the diagnosis and the operation. It was the worst time of my life. And after coming back, I had to deal with it somehow.

How did you deal with it?

I had no problem talking about it. Talking was cleansing for me. I isolated myself a bit. I worked a lot. I definitely experienced some kind of grief.

You talked about what happened? Weren't you afraid?

I only talked about it with the people closest to me. And only a few of them. Was I afraid? No. I did the procedure in a country where it was allowed, so I wasn't risking anything. I was more afraid for my loved ones. Because the judicial opinions on assistance are divided. On the one hand, a person who assists in the procedure abroad is not liable to criminal prosecution because it is illegal to assist in abortion against the law, and the law is in force on Polish territory. On the other hand, there is also an opinion – unfortunately more common – that this assistance takes place on Polish territory, but the procedure is performed outside of it. And the person helping may be held responsible. But I really organised everything myself.

Exactly. In such a situation, even if relatives want to help, the woman is still left alone.

Yes, it is a feeling of loneliness. I felt like something was eating me up from the inside. It's hard to put a name to it. I would like to say something original, but I fully share the emotions that other women talk about – helplessness, anger, disbelief that in this seemingly civilised country, I cannot get basic help, and if I don't do anything myself, nobody will help me. That's why I can't imagine what lonely people feel – or those who don't know the language or have no money. It is unimaginable for me. All I needed was a contact number. I arranged the rest myself. And yet I felt very helpless.

I thought you wouldn't agree to this conversation because, in this crazy country of ours, which is starting to resemble a police state, people are beginning to

wonder what they can say and to whom. You said you weren't ashamed because what's shameful is that there are such laws in our country.

I'm not ashamed of it, I just can't. How can I be ashamed when the procedure I got, six months before I did it, was a legal service performed by our doctors in our hospitals? And this became a morally wrong act overnight because of some pseudo-judgement. A crime. I couldn't and still can't comprehend it. I am angry at this government, and I absolutely do not feel guilty. This anger really sits deep within me. And that's probably why I am not ashamed. In Poland, abortion is demonised, while women of our mothers' age have had it many times. Legally. And are they bad women because of it? Are they bad mothers?

Shortly afterwards, you became pregnant again.

Yes, I took a risk. And it worked out. I have another healthy baby. The beginning of the pregnancy was very stressful, though. Especially, because the system became even more repressive. After all, pregnancy registers have been introduced. They act as a great deterrent and are even more stigmatising. That's why I kept my documentation from the hospital in the Netherlands. Not to defend myself but because the state will pay for what happened to me. I intend to file a lawsuit against the state when this regime ends. I am going to fight for legislation to compensate those women who survived what I did. I'm not interested in money, I want to set some precedent so that this case would help people in a difficult situation. Such compensation is simply due. It's not just about the costs – although these are not small and for many may be prohibitive – but about recognising the harm and acknowledging that what happened to me and other women in a similar situation was unlawful. Because the right to healthcare services was violated in the name of the views of old men possessed by the Church. I think that would be cleansing, and I would feel that I had done something good.



CHAPTER II
LGBTQI

ENIGLE GAZDŃ OBLAKIENIE
W POLSCE



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ANTI-GENDER AND ANTI-LGBTQI MOBILISATION AS A POLITICAL TOOL

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Enemy-building rhetoric

In recent years, populist (radical) right-wing parties have increasingly gained Europe-wide support. Their common strategy aimed at gaining and keeping political power is to polarise society by using enemy-building rhetoric and defining groups of ‘us’ and ‘them’. The alleged enemies and scapegoats are picked based on current political interests and external factors rather than ideologies or stable worldviews. This flexibility distinguishes these parties from the far-right and allows them to shape their narratives and views to increase the number of their supporters¹⁵. Hence, the chosen topics are varied. Still, there are some similarities, such as anti-migrant rhetoric (especially since 2015) and anti-gender/anti-LGBTQI – increasingly since the second half of the 2010s.

The governing parties in Hungary and Poland – Fidesz and Law and Justice (PiS), respectively, use the same radical populist political strategy to gain and keep political power – they continuously create enemy images to make the nation seem as if it is constantly under threat. In the second half of the 2010s, both parties picked the alleged ‘gender- and LGBTQI-propaganda/lobby’ as a foe and put anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation on their political agenda, presenting it as a threat to the nation’s fundamental values and continued existence.

The article compares the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary and Poland, focusing on the main similarities and differences in terms of the social, political

15 Political Capital (2022, December 5). Hogyan váltotta fel a populista veszély a szélsőjobb jelentette fenyegetést? *politicalcapital.hu*. https://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/FES_PC_Tanulmany_PopjobbVeszely_20221128.pdf

and legal context, participating actors, and narratives¹⁶. It also describes some possibilities and good examples of countering the mobilisation.

Anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary and Poland

Over the past years, Fidesz in Hungary and PiS in Poland have pictured alleged enemies threatening the nation both from inside and outside – such as refugees, NGOs, the EU, the Left, etc. Using them as a smokescreen, both governing parties have dismantled the democratic system based on the rule of law and checks and balances. They are building increasingly authoritarian states by eliminating independent institutions, curbing civil liberties, and establishing dominance over the public discourse, among others.

Despite a similar political context, the two countries' *social background* is quite dissimilar. A key difference related to our topic, is that while Hungarian society has been fairly unreligious and individualistic, Polish society has been more religious and, since the 1990s, highly influenced by ultra-conservative values. Hence, the attitude towards the LGBTQI community has been more accepting in Hungary, while in Poland, the political approach remained conservative, despite the growing acceptance and support for same-sex marriage¹⁷.

The *evolution* of the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary and Poland over the past decade has shown similarities in some aspects. In Poland, however, it started earlier (in 2015) and has been more ideology-driven, while in Hungary, it is based on pragmatic and cynical political considerations. 2015 was an important year in both countries: in Poland, PiS won the majority in both chambers of the parliament, and its candidate became the president; in Hungary, Fidesz took a far-right turn¹⁸. The Hungarian governing party put the mobilisation on its agenda in 2017¹⁹ and

16 The analysis is based on the following study: Political Capital (2022). A comparison of the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary and Poland. https://www.politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article_read=1&article_id=3026

17 Ambroziak, A. (2019, February 25). Rekordowe poparcie dla związków partnerskich i równości małżeńskiej. *oko.press*. <https://oko.press/rekordowe-poparcie-dla-zwiazkow-partnerskich-i-rownosci-malzenskiej-sondaz/>

18 Bálint, K., et al. (2020). A 100 years after Trianon: the (far-)right in today's Hungary. *Political Capital*. https://politicalcapital.hu/library.php?article_read=1&article_id=2659

19 Kováts, E. (2021). *Ellenségkép, hegemonia és reflexió. A gender fogalmának tartalma és funkciója az Orbán-rezsim és a német radikális jobboldal politikájában* [Doctoral dissertation, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Állam- és Jogtudományi Kar Politikatudományi Doktori Iskola].

boosted it even more in 2021–2022. Before, the topic was mainly driven by far-right and fringe actors, as well as the Catholic Church. In Poland, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) – especially abortion – has been an important topic for many parties and the Catholic Church since the early 1990s. ‘Gender ideology’ as a political phrase gained ground in the early 2000s. The mobilisation by PiS started in 2015 and intensified significantly in 2019.

Regarding *LGBTQI rights*, the situation in the two countries is similar in more aspects. Still – Poland is more restrictive in some respects and Hungary in others. For example, in Poland, the civil same-sex union is illegal, while it has been accepted in Hungary since 2009. The two countries are equally restrictive regarding same-sex adoption and the legal recognition of gender change. In Hungary, two categories of legislation can be discerned²⁰: 1) ‘preventive legislative acts’ which aim to prevent ‘unwanted’ social and legal developments from spilling into Hungary from the West, especially concerning transgender rights; 2) acts that curb acquired rights or set up new barriers for existing rights. For example, the abolishment of the legal recognition of transgender persons (2020)²¹, the ban on adoption by same-sex couples (2020),²² prohibiting the presentation and promotion of homosexuality and gender change to minors, and limiting the access of NGOs to schools through the so-called ‘Child Protection Law’ (2021)²³. In Poland, PiS implemented an education reform between 2015 and 2019, which excluded all forms of science-based sex education from schools and limited the access of NGOs to schools²⁴. Furthermore, in 2019 and 2020, around 100 PiS-ruled and allied cities and regions across Poland declared themselves ‘LGBT-free’ in ‘opposition to LGBT ideology’²⁵.

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- 20 Kováts, E. (2021). *Ellenségkép, hegemonia és reflexió. A gender fogalmának tartalma és funkciója az Orbán-rezsim és a német radikális jobboldal politikájában* [Doctoral dissertation, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Állam- és Jogtudományi Kar Politikatudományi Doktori Iskola].
- 21 Magyar Közlöny (2020, May 28). 2020. évi XXX. törvény egyes közigazgatási tárgyú törvények módosításáról, valamint ingyenes vagyonszármazásáról. *Magyar Közlöny*. <https://magyarkozlony.hu/dokumentumok/2473fb7525bcb68f41e2b0d2a1bb60e718fa4eff/megtekintes>
- 22 Magyar Közlöny (2020, December 22). 2020. évi CLXV. törvény az egyes igazságügyi tárgyú törvények módosításáról. *Magyar Közlöny*. <https://magyarkozlony.hu/dokumentumok/39c159f76bc2b-f29e090c0966f0941963ffab3f9/megtekintes>
- 23 Magyar Közlöny (2021, June 23). 2021. évi LXXIX. törvény a pedofil bűnelkövetőkkel szembeni szigorúbb fellépésről, valamint a gyermekek védelme érdekében egyes törvények módosításáról. *Magyar Közlöny*. <https://magyarkozlony.hu/dokumentumok/ba643dee7b59c2a1901132e6e3320483d2245b56/megtekintes>
- 24 Hodun, M. (2017, April 22). REVIEW #6: Education in Poland at the Service of the Ruling Party. *4liberty.eu*. <http://4liberty.eu/review-6-education-in-poland-at-the-service-of-the-ruling-party/>
- 25 Ciobani, C. (2020, February 25). A third of Poland declared ‘LGBT-free zone’. *Balkaninsight*. <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/02/25/a-third-of-poland-declared-lgbt-free-zone/>

Domestic and international actors

In terms of *domestic actors*, a significant difference is present between the two countries. In Hungary, Fidesz is not only the central actor in the mobilisation, but it also dominates all other actors in some way²⁶. Whereas in Poland, there are influential actors independent from PiS. In the two countries, largely the same kind of actors participate in the mobilisation, even though some are more influential in Hungary, while others in Poland. In Hungary, the main actors are government politicians and government-organised NGOs (GONGOs), think tanks and intellectuals. In Poland, independent actors such as conservative think tanks like Ordo Iuris²⁷ and religious organisations – mainly the Catholic Church – are predominantly influential. In both countries, the media serve as a key platform for the mobilisation; in Hungary, government-organised and far-right outlets and in Poland, conservative and religious outlets. Although far-right actors are present in both countries, their role in the mobilisation is less significant than before the governing parties seized the topic.

Both countries' actors are embedded in the *international network* of anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation, although this is of greater importance for Hungary. This international network²⁸ mainly consists of ultra-conservative organisations such as the World Congress of Families, CitizenGo, One of Us, Political Network of Values, and many others, especially from Europe and the US²⁹. In Hungary, establishing close relations with such international actors is a part of Fidesz's international political influence-building³⁰, and the main actors are high-level Fidesz politicians and GONGOs³¹. Polish domestic actors are also connected with these international actors, even though, for Poland this is less important, as Polish actors have built up their own

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- 26 Sarkadi Nagy, M. (2021, June 1). Külföldi szövetséges „civil” szervezetek segítik a genderideológia fantomjával hadakozó kormányt. *atlatszo.hu*. <https://atlatszo.hu/kozpenz/2021/06/01/kulfoldi-szovetsegesek-civil-szervezetek-segitik-a-genderideologia-fantomjaval-hadakozo-kormanyt/>, Political Capital (2022, July 22). Anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary: evolution, actors, networks. *politicalcapital.hu*. https://www.politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article_read=1&article_id=3037
- 27 Gielewska, A., et al. (2021, May 7). How radical movements are reshaping Europe. *VSQUARE*. <https://vsquare.org/how-radical-movements-are-reshaping-central-europe/>
- 28 Dakusza, J. (2021). Ordo Iuris and a global web of ultra-conservative organisations. *VSQUARE*. <https://vsquare.org/ordo-iuris-and-a-global-web-of-ultra-conservative-organisations/>
- 29 Political Capital (2022, July 22). Anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary: evolution, actors, networks. *politicalcapital.hu*. https://www.politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article_read=1&article_id=3037
- 30 Political Capital (2022, December 19). The building of Hungarian political influence – The Orbán regime's efforts to export illiberalism. *politicalcapital.hu*. https://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC-Boll_HUNfluence_Study_ENG.pdf
- 31 Political Capital (2022, July 22). Anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary: evolution, actors, networks. *politicalcapital.hu*. https://www.politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article_read=1&article_id=3037

international network focusing mainly on Central and Eastern Europe³². Hungary and Poland are important allies in the mobilisation. Their cooperation works on two levels. On the political level, the two governments have built an alliance for defence and defiance and learned from each other in terms of tactics and messaging. On the civic level, the cooperation is mainly present in the partnership³³ of the Hungarian GONGO Center for Fundamental Rights and the Polish think tank Ordo Iuris and includes joint lobbying and advocacy.

Anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary and Poland use the same *narratives*. Most of them are based on the same framework: ‘the gender and LGBTQI ideology/propaganda is attacking normality’, where ‘normality’ refers to various concepts, such as traditional values, traditional roles of men and women, Christianity, etc. The majority of the narratives are present in both countries, with some differences and to varying extents. The main narrative in both countries is the *need to protect children and (traditional) family* as a role model. ‘*Child protection*’ has recently become the dominant narrative in Hungary – as a base for the so-called ‘Child Protection Law’ passed in June 2021 and the ‘child protection’ referendum held simultaneously with the general elections in April 2022³⁴. This narrative also implies that there would be a connection between homosexuality and paedophilia, which is used in both countries. Another widespread narrative in both countries is that *the West/Brussels/Liberals/Left is/are attacking Hungarian/Polish/Christian traditions and values and ‘normality’*. The narrative, especially in Hungary, also implies that criticism from the EU or certain countries is ideology-driven due to the government’s anti-migration and anti-gender approach – ignoring the fact that criticism refers to the state of the rule of law and corruption. Two more narratives are present, primarily in Hungary: the narrative about *György Soros spreading gender and LGBTQI propaganda* (absent in Poland) and the narrative that equates ‘*gender and LGBTQI ideology*’ with *Marxism and Communism* (marginal in Poland).

32 Dauksza, J., et al. (2020, December 30). The golden lion roars from Cracow. *VSQUARE*. <https://vsquare.org/the-golden-lion-roars-from-cracow/>

33 Tóth Bíró, M., Bálint, K. (2021, November 25). Közpénzből éheznek az elismerésre: így vándorolnak a milliárdok a kormány kedvenc szakértőjéhez. *Telex*. <https://telex.hu/belfold/2021/11/25/kozpenz-milliardok-a-kormany-szakertoire-alapjogokert-kozpont-batthyany-lajos-alapitvany>

34 Hanke Vela, J. (2021, July 21). Orbán announces referendum on Hungarian anti-LGBTQ+ law. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-referendum-hungary-anti-lgbtq-minors-law/>

Countering the mobilisation: possibilities and good examples

As anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation has been on the political agenda of the governing parties in both Hungary and Poland for years, countering it effectively is difficult. LGBTQI communities fight on the one hand for their rights, and on the other hand, for their mental and physical well-being. Hence, support from society as a whole is greatly needed. However, certain actors – such as parties and politicians, the media, NGOs and religious organisations – have a greater responsibility for countering the mobilisation. Political parties must stand up for the rights of every citizen – including LGBTQI communities – and act to assert their interests. Opposition parties should not let the governing parties monopolise the discourse on gender and LGBTQI; rather, they should create counter-narratives based on democratic values. The media plays a crucial role in creating and spreading counter-narratives. Besides, it can also make LGBTQI communities visible and their views heard, which can effectively counter the intent to dehumanise these communities.

Positive examples of countering anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation can be found in both Hungary and Poland. In Hungary, LGBTQI, human rights, and other NGOs launched a campaign³⁵ against the so-called ‘Child protection referendum’, urging people to vote invalidly and drawing attention to the exclusionary and absurd nature of it, as well as the importance of acceptance in society. Thus, the referendum ended up invalid – even though the results also showed how successful the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation was, with the majority voting in line with it³⁶. Moreover, in October 2022, an inter-fractional parliamentary group for LGBTQI rights was formed by opposition parties³⁷. In Poland, more and more equality marches – the Polish equivalent of Pride marches – take place every year across the country, even in small towns³⁸. Furthermore, many politicians from opposition parties have frequently stood

35 *Érvénytelen kérdésre érvénytelen válasz* (2022). Campaign webpage: <https://www.ervenytelenul.hu/>

36 Csatári, F., Janecskó, K., Horváth Kállai, A. (2022, April 4). If Fidesz won, why is the so-called ‘child protection’ referendum invalid? *Telex* <https://telex.hu/english/2022/04/04/if-fidesz-won-why-is-the-so-called-child-protection-referendum-invalid>

37 24.hu. (2020, October 11). Megalakult a parlament LMBTQ-jogokkal foglalkozó képviselőcsoportja. *24.hu*. <https://24.hu/kozelet/2022/10/11/lmbtq-jogokkal-foglalkozo-kepviselocsoport-alakult-parlament/>

38 Tilles, D. (2022, September 4). Thousands join LGBT parades in Polish cities. *Notes from Poland*. <https://notes-frompoland.com/2022/09/04/thousands-join-lgbt-parades-in-polish-cities/>

up for LGBTQI rights³⁹, and in 2022, opposition leader Donald Tusk pledged to act for LGBTQI rights in the case of winning the upcoming elections in 2023⁴⁰.

In addition, examples from both Hungary and Poland show that the European Union can also act effectively to counter the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation. In Poland, the EU stood up against cities and regions which declared themselves ‘LGBT-free zones’ by cutting funds⁴¹. As a result, many cities withdrew their declarations⁴², and one even replaced the anti-LGBT resolution with an anti-discrimination declaration⁴³. In Hungary, the European Commission sued the country over the so-called ‘Child Protection Law’ as it discriminates against LGBTQI people⁴⁴.

In Hungary and Poland, polls show that despite the mobilisation in the past few years, these societies have become more accepting and supportive of LGBTQI communities and their rights⁴⁵. Currently, the mobilisation by the governing parties has been turned back in both countries. While it may intensify again, this suggests that activities to counter the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation are not in vain, and can be effective.

Similar Patterns

The comparison of the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary and Poland shows that although there are important differences between the two countries, the mobilisation is similar in many aspects. The greatest difference is that in Poland,

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- 39 Satenstein, L. (2020, August 10). Members of Poland’s Parliament Staged a Protest With Their Clothes. *Vogue*. <https://www.vogue.com/article/poland-president-duda-rainbow-parliament-lgbtq-protest>
- 40 Tilles, D. (2022, June 8). Tusk promises abortion up to 12 weeks and same-sex partnerships in ‘march towards modernity’. *Notes from Poland* <https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/06/08/tusk-promises-abortion-up-to-12-weeks-and-same-sex-partnerships-in-march-towards-modernity/>
- 41 Pronczuk, M. (2020, July 30). Polish Towns That Declared Themselves ‘L.G.B.T. Free’ Are Denied E.U. Funds. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/world/europe/LGBT-free-poland-EU-funds.html>
- 42 Euronews (2021, September 27). More Polish regions revoke anti-LGBT declarations over EU funds withdrawal. *euronews.com*. <https://www.euronews.com/2021/09/27/more-polish-regions-revoke-anti-lgbt-declarations-over-eu-funds-withdrawal>
- 43 Tilles, D. (2023, January 7). Polish town replaces anti-LGBT resolution with anti-discrimination declaration amid EU funding threat. *Notes from Poland*. <https://notesfrompoland.com/2023/01/07/polish-town-replaces-anti-lgbt-resolution-with-anti-discrimination-declaration-amid-eu-funding-threat/>
- 44 Deutsche Welle (2022, July 15). EU Commission sues Hungary over LGBTQ law. *dw.com*. <https://www.dw.com/en/eu-commission-sues-hungary-over-lgbtq-law/a-62310383>
- 45 HVG (2023, January 31). Nem sikerült teljesen átmosni az emberek agyát a kormány homofób gyűlölet-kampányával – derül ki egy felmérésből. *hvg.hu*. https://hvg.hu/elet/20230131_Nem_sikerult_atmosni_az_emberek_agyat_a_kormany_homofob_gyuloletkampanyaval_derul_ki_egy_reprezentativ_felmeresbol, Ambroziak, A. (2022, December 12). „Akceptuję, ale po co się tak obnoszą”. Co o polskiej homofobii mówi nam nowy sondaż Ipsos? *oko.press*. <https://oko.press/co-o-polskiej-homofobii-mowi-nowy-sondaz-ipsos>

there are social actors independent from the government that mobilise against ‘gender’ and LGBTQI rights, while in Hungary, the issue would be rather marginal without the government pushing it. However, in both countries, the mobilisation is built on similar patterns. The governing parties have picked the topic of gender and LGBTQI to gain and keep political power, hence, they have used similar narratives and measures tailored to the situation and characteristics of the given society. As a result, the mobilisation follows a similar path in both countries and illustrates well how enemy-building rhetoric works in practice. However, examples from both countries show that it is possible to counter these discriminative activities.

[INTERVIEW]

POLISH STATE PROMOTES BIGAMY

Joanna Łopat talks with **Miłosz Przepiórkowski**
and **Mateusz Urban**

Are you already desensitised, or are you affected and hurt by politicians' statements about the LGBT+ community?

Mateusz: We don't watch TV, so it always hits us a bit later. We also live in a big city where we don't experience homophobia daily. But that's because, in public spaces, we behave like heteros. Because we know that this hateful language works.

Miłosz: We don't reveal ourselves in public, mostly because of me. It's not about fear because I'm not afraid of being beaten up. It's more about discomfort. The discomfort of stares. One time, we tried it and walked through a part of Warsaw holding hands. Only one person – crazy, I think – screamed that they'll pray for us. Nobody else reacted. Nobody called us 'faggots'. But those looks. First, into our eyes. Then at our hands. And I saw, not disgust, but surprise. Surprise on their faces. But on such a normal stroll, I want to be just a person, not an activist manifesting something. In Berlin or Vienna, nobody looks at us. And in Warsaw, I think to myself – what do I need that for? What do I need those looks for? I want to be invisible.

That gesture – let's stroll through Warsaw holding hands – looks like a manifesto.

Miłosz: Because that's what it is.

Mateusz: But people are surprised because they don't see people like us. If more LGBT+ people open up and go out in the streets, there will be fewer surprised stares. There have to be those braver ones. It's impossible otherwise.

Mateusz, you said earlier that politicians' hateful language works. What did you mean by that?

Mateusz: After each hateful speech by politicians, people from our community say they're scared. And I'm not talking about the public space, but what happens later in their homes. It's especially difficult for young people whose families follow political narratives. That's why for LGBT+ people, holidays are the worst. The entire families gather then – aunts, uncles and grandparents, who watch TV and go to church, which plays a big role in spreading this hateful narrative. They sit at the table and talk about faggots.

And then the Lambda Association helpline, where you work, is constantly busy?

Miłosz: Yes. We operate during holidays exceptionally because we are needed. During the year, the helpline is available from Monday to Friday for three hours a day. And in 2020, a presidential election year, we received more than a thousand calls. That was a record. The presidential candidate's statements caused anxiety.

That's why I find it amusing when people say, 'Andrzej Duda is not my president'. Unfortunately, he is my president, as he was elected for this position by the majority. And when my president says that people from the LGBT+ community are not people, only ideology, it affects me. Because I know that the majority voted for him.

Mateusz: We should mention that the Rainbow Night took place shortly after the elections.⁴⁶ Police behaviour and arrests left people horrified.

It was leaked to the media that police officers – quote – ‘were instructed to arrest all persons wearing LGBT colours, regardless of how they behaved’.

Mateusz: They even arrested a guy whose wife sent him to buy cheese. And he was taken into custody with that cheese.

After such a Rainbow Night, what do the people calling the helpline say? Or after another attack directed at them from the parliamentary podium?

Miłosz: They're afraid. These people often can't just pack up and leave. They often depend financially on their parents. They're scared that their parents will find out.

46 On 7 August 2020, protests in defence of arrested LGBT activist Margot were organised in the centre of Warsaw. Police detained 48 people at the time. The detainees were treated violently by the officers. According to reports from the Ombudsman's office, torture and obstruction of access to a lawyer occurred. Transgender people were particularly humiliated.

They're scared of their reaction and of those around them. They're scared to out themselves because they're not ready to lose contact with their family. Even if this family is homo- or transphobic. They are stuck in these relationships like victims. Then the Stockholm syndrome kicks in. A kind of devastating addiction.

If you were to rank hateful words, which would make the list?

Miłosz: Definitely, Duda's statement that we are not people but an ideology. And Kaczyński's recent remarks about transgender and non-binary people. According to him, this is a whim: you're a man until noon, and then you're a woman. And then there's the one about dysfunctional teenage lesbians. For Kaczyński, it's not normal for a teenage girl to be aware of her sexuality. It's an election year, so the search for a scapegoat is on again.

Mateusz: Yes, and a substitute topic. They have to, somehow, divert the attention from inflation. They have to strike at a group that is often defenceless in such a situation. Because the best line of defence is to show oneself – this is me. I am a person and not an ideology. But there are few people willing to put themselves on display.

But on the whole, there aren't just a few LGBT+ people?

Miłosz: It is estimated that there may be between two and four million LGBT+ people. This number of course includes minors. But we do not have precise figures.

Then let's try to create an image of this Polish reality – on the one hand, we have kids who are already aware of their sexuality, and on the other, politicians who use hateful language against them.

Mateusz: Society is already much more open than we think. Even in towns. Politicians are not a representative group because they're usually very conservative. Even those in left-wing parties go to church, marry in church.

Do you think people in towns are more open than we believe?

Mateusz: Perhaps people in the countryside vote for PiS not because they consider homosexuals to be non-humans, but because PiS gives them 500+.⁴⁷ And when they have several children, that's some serious cash for them.

Milosz: We look at people who vote for PiS from a Warsaw perspective. Often with superiority. As if they were simple-minded villagers. But we should understand their perspective. Treat them not as enemies but as people who have finally been given something. They are finally appreciated. I don't condemn the voters of PiS. They were excluded by previous parties. They were invisible. They were called mohair berets.⁴⁸ Remember the 'take your granny's ID card' campaign?⁴⁹ It was funny, but it was actually ageism. Grandmothers were treated like stupid old women who did what the priest told them. PiS has empowered them. They finally feel valued. And when they go to vote, they don't think, 'oh dear, PiS says such terrible things about gays'. No. PiS voters want to put food on their tables. I don't blame them for that.

Mateusz: Recently, I saw a poll showing that support for civil partnerships and marriage equality is growing even in atypical groups: 50+, in villages and towns. Also, among voters of the far-right Confederation. They vote for those they want to get something from. For parties that deliver on their promises.

Miłosz: It is a novelty in our democracy that someone promises something and then gives it. PiS is very consistent in this. It turned out that there is no need to raise the retirement age after all, that there is money for 500+.

But you still can't get married – not in Poland – and you married in Berlin.

Milosz: Yes. But before we left, we had to collect all the documents in Poland. We needed a marital status certificate. I walked into the office in the centre of Warsaw and waited to be asked – what for? For what purpose? When I heard the question, I answered that I wanted to get married abroad, and the lady at the window smiled.

47 Translator's Note: 500+ ('Family 500+') is a programme launched by the Polish government in 2016 to boost birth-rates and reduce child poverty. It grants a tax-free benefit of PLN 500 per month for the second and any consecutive children until they reach the age of 18.

48 Translator's Note: 'Mohair beret' ('moherowy beret') is a pejorative expression that stands for people who support the views expressed by the Polish conservative-nationalist Catholic movement; the expression originated from the characteristic headgear worn by the stereotypical representatives of the group.

49 'Save Poland. Take your grandmother's ID during the election' ('Uratuj Polskę. Zabierz babci dowód na wybory') -this slogan became popular on social media during the 2007 elections.

I think she knew what it was about. But we got the documents without any problem. Poland allowed us to get married abroad.

Mateusz: With this certificate, we went to Berlin to arrange the wedding. That was in January, and in April, we returned for the ceremony, which was held in a small group. The next day we returned to Poland and had a wedding reception for a hundred people.

You had a wedding ceremony, reception and then?

Milosz: What happens afterwards is very important. I checked with the register office that all marriages (it didn't say only those of a man and a woman) performed abroad have to be reported either to the consulate or the register office within 30 days.

Mateusz: So we translated our marriage certificate and went to register our marriage. In the form we got, we crossed out the word 'wife' in the relevant places.

Milosz: The lady who took the application said that it would not be accepted anyway. I then asked, 'Does that mean my marital status is "bachelor"?' She said yes. So I asked, 'In that case, could I get married in Poland?' To this, she answered: 'Sir, such questions are for the supervisor'.

Mateusz: We concluded that the Polish state promotes bigamy.

What happened later?

Mateusz: A negative decision came very quickly. We appealed it to the Voivodeship Administrative Court, and after another refusal, we took our case to the Supreme Administrative Court and, at the same time to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Do you hope this will make any difference?

Miłosz: It's our little internal conflict. Mateusz has more hope than I do. Because even in Strasbourg, these cases wait for years.

So what is your status now?

Miłosz: In all honesty? No idea. In the marital status column, I don't know what I'm supposed to write to be truthful. Because I don't know which law applies to me – Polish or European?

Mateusz: When we go to Germany by train, up to Frankfurt/Oder we are bachelors, and from Frankfurt to Berlin we are married. And then again up to the border we are married, and in Poland – according to the law – strangers.

Miłosz Przepiórkowski (born 1979) – deputy chairman of the Lambda Warsaw Association. Co-founder of the LGBTQIA+ Refugee Assistance Centre, activist for people under the Bi+ umbrella. Graduate of the US Congress Office “Open World” programme, mentor.

Mateusz Urban (born 1981) – English philologist and expert in cultural studies, since 2008 affiliated with the Lambda Warsaw Association, where he led support groups and was involved in cultural activities; currently works as a translator.



CHAPTER III

MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

THE STRATEGY BEHIND ORBÁN'S ANTI-REFUGEE RHETORIC

Dániel Mikecz

Reinforcing stereotypes against minorities, as well as intensifying and generating conflicts to mobilise successfully for elections are standard political tools of the right-wing, populist Fidesz government. Apart from the LGBT community, refugees have been attacked most often by the government since the mid-2010s. Due to economic hardships in Hungary, the government can be expected to continue its policy of incitement and mobilisation against ethnic, sexual and social minorities and vulnerable social groups in the 2022–2026 election cycle as well. This chapter reviews how Viktor Orbán's illiberal regime created a hostile environment for refugees and refugee-aiding organisations and uses negative sentiments for its benefit. The chapter also recommends some strategies against this fearmongering.

The 2015 refugee crisis and the reactions

The refugee crisis that culminated in the summer of 2015 caught Hungarian society by surprise in more ways than one. Never before have they been confronted with immigration from outside Europe on such a large scale and so directly. The sudden onset of this unknown phenomenon was accompanied by a political communication campaign at a scale unprecedented since the fall of the Berlin Wall. As early as 2015, posters calling on refugees and immigrants to respect Hungarian culture and jobs – in Hungarian – were already flooding the country. The following year, in 2016, the government initiated a referendum on the European distribution quota, an issue for which a majority in parliament would have been sufficient. The aim of the referendum was to keep the issue on the agenda and mobilise voters. It was also the purpose behind national consultations associating immigration with terrorism, then demonising George Soros and presenting immigration as a cultural and demographic change in Europe. In the consultation questionnaire, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and Amnesty International were referred to as Soros organisations. The Hungarian Helsinki Committee sued the government agency responsible for the consultation. In late

2019, the Supreme Court ruled that the government had violated the organisation's reputation. Hence, the narrative also involves the stigmatisation of NGOs as foreign agents. During these publicly-funded campaigns, government posters were found state-wide, reaching every household and every voter with the government's political message. The government's message was also delivered by the entire public media and the press in the hands of oligarchs close to the government. The public funding of the campaign could have also been effective because of the strong antipathy towards foreigners and immigration in a society still unable to come to terms with the trauma of the loss in Trianon. However, the extensive government communication since 2015 has reinforced this attitude.

The logic of anti-refugee agitation

While it is well known that in 2015, during the European refugee crisis, the Hungarian government deliberately reinforced prejudices against refugees, other campaigns targeting other minorities followed a very similar pattern. This strategy is the process of creating enemy images⁵⁰. A similar tool was the criminalisation of homelessness. In 2018, the two-thirds legislative majority of Fidesz banned and criminalised 'living in public places' in the Fundamental Law of Hungary. Before the coronavirus outbreak, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said the compensation awarded to Roma youths in a small town in East-Central Hungary for local school segregation practices was unfair. The government also raised the issue of what it described in its communication as 'prison business'. It refers to compensation awarded to detainees for inadequate detention conditions, in an anti-Roma context. In February 2020, the government even planned a national consultation on school segregation and compensation for inadequate detention conditions. However, due to the outbreak of the global pandemic, top-down mobilisation was set aside. Nevertheless, in 2021, the government launched a referendum on the protection of minors, which included questions suggesting that LGBT organisations were promoting gender reassignment for minors in public schools and through media. The top-down-initiated referendum was part of the government's anti-LGBT narrative, which objected to sexual education and child protection⁵¹. The referendum was held at the same time as the general electin

50 Kopper, Á., Susánszky, P., Tóth, G. & Gerő, M. (2017). Creating Suspicion and Vigilance: Using Enemy Images for Hindering Mobilization. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics*, 3(3).

51 Takács, J., Fobear, K. & Schmitsek, S. (2022). Resisting genderphobia in Hungary. *Politics and Governance*, 10(4). <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v10i4.5528>

in 2022, yet it was invalid due to low turnout. However, the campaign that preceded it stigmatised awareness-raising programmes on the acceptance of sexual minorities.

Nevertheless, to properly understand the reason why the government uses the anti-refugee narrative and agitates against refugee-aiding groups and NGOs, the entire issue should be put into a broader context. First of all, explicit ethnocentric and implicit racist messages can be conveyed in relation to migration. Also, the opposition parties do not explicitly address the issue, so Fidesz could identify its opponents, such as NGOs and civil society organisations. The anti-refugee narrative can also serve as a negative message alongside the government's positive pro-family policies. The latter is also frequently juxtaposed with immigration as a solution to the challenge of the decreasing population. Furthermore, another important function of the anti-refugee narrative is to juxtapose the West, which involves 'Brussels' and East-Central Europe. According to Viktor Orbán's narrative, the West is losing its economic power and political influence mainly due to the rise of China. One of the reasons for the 'downfall of the Occident' is the loss of Christian identity. In his view, it is the consequence of mass immigration from non-Christian countries and regions. Hence, for Fidesz, anti-refugee politics is an ideal topic in several respects. As international comparisons show, public opinion in Hungary is more negative about immigration (Table 1). In 2012, the attitude regarding immigration was higher than before 2010, yet after the 2015 refugee crisis, there was a substantial decrease (Table 1). Such a tendency can be found in Germany as well, yet the proportion was lower. The data demonstrate that anti-immigration sentiments existed before 2015, yet they did not manifest in a political conflict. However, the Orbán government could effectively utilise such latent attitudes.

Table 1. Mean values of attitudes towards immigration, 2012–2018

Immigrants make country worse or better place to live

0 = 'worse place to live', 10 = 'better place to live'

Germany					Hungary				
2008	2012	2014	2016	2018	2008	2012	2014	2016	2018
5,05	5,35	5,34	5,21	5,35	3,79	4,39	4,03	3,53	3,88

Source: European Social Survey

Thus, with the help of the issue, the 'decadent' Western and the 'healthy' Eastern Europe could be juxtaposed, which also includes the above-mentioned framing of the government's family support policy as an alternative to immigration.

Liberal answers, counter-arguments

To successfully challenge the populist right's politically-motivated agitation against refugees and migrants in Hungary, certain aspects of the government's campaign should be considered and used to create counter-arguments. This section briefly discusses these points.

- Since 2015, Viktor Orbán has been talking about the cultural degradation that immigration is bringing to the western half of Europe. After eight years, it is possible to demonstrate that, despite undeniable tensions, those societies are able to deal with internal and external problems more effectively.
- In the context of the war in Ukraine, it is advisable to raise Hungarian society's awareness that many refugees are fleeing real conflict, risking their lives and their families.
- Finally, it would be beneficial to reach a joint stance on certain social issues, which could be juxtaposed with Fidesz's rhetoric of seeking an adversary.

Not a mere communication

For Fidesz, social conflicts are not problems to be solved with good governance but opportunities for politicking. The Hungarian populist right-wing government is looking for issues in which its own opinion enjoys the majority's support. At the same time, it can force the opposition parties to represent a minority opinion. During the refugee crisis in 2015, it became clear that most Hungarians shared the position of Fidesz in rejecting immigration. Of course, for the '60–40' strategy (60% support for the government) to work, it is also necessary for Fidesz to keep the given issue on the agenda with the help of state resources and to formulate the position held by the opposition. For example, in connection with the refugee crisis and immigration, the Hungarian opposition never referred to the related writings of George Soros. Yet, Fidesz was able to successfully spread the opposite information among the Hungarian public.

While the anti-refugee narrative was very successful during the 2018 election, the Hungarian government has used different enemy images, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the regime returns to anti-immigration and ethnocentric narratives from time to time. In 2022, in his annual speech, Viktor Orbán differentiated between mixed and non-mixed races, and he declared not to belong to the latter. Nevertheless, the anti-refugee, anti-minority narrative is not a mere communication tool but marks the alliance-making strategy of the Hungarian government as well, which might also have consequences on European politics.

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ESS Round 7: European Social Survey Round 7 Data. (2014). Data file edition 2.2. Sikt – Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC. doi:10.21338/NSD-ESS7–2014.

ESS Round 8: European Social Survey Round 8 Data. (2016). Data file edition 2.2. Sikt – Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC. doi:10.21338/NSD-ESS8–2016.

ESS Round 9: European Social Survey Round 9 Data. (2018). Data file edition 3.1. Sikt – Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC. doi:10.21338/NSD-ESS9–2018.

MIGRANT AS AN OBJECT OF POLITICAL ACTION

Dominik Héjj

The migration crisis in 2015 posed a significant challenge for Europe. It has also become a contributor to legitimising political action in Hungary, as well as in Poland after the parliamentary elections held in the autumn of 2015. The purpose of this short essay is to try to indicate the differences and similarities in the use of the migration issue in political competition – and it is a very useful tool with multiple applications.

Different foundations: 2015–2021

At the very outset, it can be pointed out that a direct comparison between Poland and Hungary is very difficult to make, if possible at all. Why? For in 2015, the *migrant crisis* in Hungary really happened. At its peak, tens of thousands of people a day were crossing the border from the Serbian side. Several hundred thousand people passed through Hungary, heading toward the border crossing with Austria (in Hegyeshalom) and on to Germany. In Poland, on the other hand, this phenomenon was something in fact unknown up until the Kremlin-inflamed attempts by migrants brought in by Belarus to cross Poland's eastern border in 2021. Yes, migrants were used in the election campaign to frighten people, but the Polish public reacted to the issue depending on political sympathies. The topic of migration was not a catalyst for social divisions for a long time, and when we faced attempts at crossing the border from the Belarusian side, the majority of the population supported maintaining border defense. At most, the people were opposed to push-backs of families with children.

In Hungary, on the other hand, almost from the outset, support for the government's actions toward migrants significantly exceeded that which would be directly based on party sympathies, reaching over 70%. The construction of a fence on the border with

Serbia was gaining the approval of up to 4/5 of the population⁵². Importantly, it was backed by 70% of opposition supporters. The Századvég polling institute, sympathising with the government, asked Hungarians in 2015 about whether they supported European Union-imposed immigrant quotas. 63% of respondents were against, 27% in favour, and the remaining 10% did not have or did not want to express an opinion. Moreover, 75% of those surveyed agreed with the statement that whether a country houses immigrants should be left solely to its discretion. 21% had the opposite opinion⁵³. The survey was then repeated in 2016, and the percentage of opponents rose to 87%⁵⁴.

It should be noted that the situations of 2015 and 2021 are incomparable, although the Hungarian authorities are trying to juxtapose them⁵⁵. The events of 2015 were not stimulated by the hostile policies of a neighbouring state, as happened six years later in the Polish-Belarusian border region. This means that while the migrant crisis in 2015 could theoretically be explained by a possible 'clash of civilizations', as Hungarian propaganda attempted to do, the 2021 actions in Poland should be unequivocally assessed as an allied effort against regional security – not only against Poland, but also the Baltic States. From the perspective of 24 February 2022, there is no doubt that the migrant crisis on the Polish border in 2021 was a prelude to broader actions destabilising the region, which became one of the overtures to full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine.

It's crucial to bear in mind that when the anti-migrant narrative settled in Hungary for good in 2015, and Budapest rejected the EU's migrant relocation mechanism – the so-called 'quotas' – the previous coalition of the liberal Civic Platform and the Polish People's Party was still in power in Poland, and they wanted to join that mechanism. However, a change was brought about by the result of the parliamentary elections in the autumn of 2015, in which the United Right (Law and Justice and allies) won. Although the Polish right has built its electoral strategy on fear of immigrants, there

52 Mandiner (2018, 19 March), Nézőpont: Hatalmas a kerítés támogatottsága, https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20180319_nezopont_hatalmas_a_kerites_tamogatottsaga

53 Magyar Hírlap (2015, 13 November), Századvég: A magyarok többsége ellenzi a kötelező kvótát, https://www.magyarhirnap.hu/belfold/Szazadveg_A_magyarok_tobbsege_ellenzi_a_kotelezo_kvotat

54 Origo (2016, 17 May), Századvég: A magyarok 87 százaléka elutasítaná a kvótát, <https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20160517-szazadveg-felmeres-72-szazalek-venne-reszt-kvota-nepszavazason.html>

55 What the two countries have in common is that they were not so much destination countries for migrants, but transit countries on their way to Germany. At the height of Hungary's migrant crisis, on 7 October, the 444.hu website, citing data from the Immigration and Citizenship Office, reported that of all those arriving in Hungary, 300 people were granted refugee status in the country, that is, 0.2% of those who submitted their applications. See 444.hu (2015, 7 September), A Magyarországra érkezett menekültek 0,2 százaléka meg is kapta a menekültstátuszt, <https://444.hu/2015/09/07/a-magyarorszagra-erkezett-menekultek-02-szazaleka-meg-is-kapta-a-menekultstatuszt>

is no doubt that the situation in Poland has never resembled that in Hungary. Even the consequences of the crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border cannot be compared to what the Hungarians earlier experienced: In Budapest, migrants camped out in the city centre. Until mid-September 2015, when physical entanglements on the border with Serbia and Croatia were erected, migrants moved across the country from the south to the northwest. With the benefit of hindsight, research and available literature, we know that among the 'migrants' who got to Hungary were both refugees and economic migrants who moved from the Balkans in search of a better life, mainly from Kosovo⁵⁶. The later Paris attacks are said to have been prepared at the Keleti train station in Budapest and one of the hotels in Budapest⁵⁷. In contrast, those who crossed the border between Poland and Belarus were most often caught in the immediate vicinity of the border. The conflict remained largely isolated right in the border region, and the increase in the number of migrants was not observed in large urban centres.

Institutionalisation of the 'migrant – enemy'

The forces and resources involved in Hungary in the fight against migration were incomparably greater than those used in Poland. Migration was used as a foundation for election campaigns in 2018 and 2022. During the latter, the main axis of polarisation became, of course, security due to the fact that the vote took place about six weeks after Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In the Hungarian media, almost every day for nearly eight years, the topic of migration has come up in some form in speeches by politicians or reporters' material. According to government propaganda, proof of the 'migrant problem' in Europe are individual crimes, e.g. beating, murder or rape, committed by a migrant in another country – mainly Scandinavian, or Germany. The case of Germany is relevant here, since the failure of the European Union's migration policy is qualified unequivocally negatively as the fault of the so-called 'Brussels bureaucrats' and the German government under former Chancellor Angela Merkel.⁵⁸

What distinguishes Poland from Hungary is not only the scale of the Budapest government's initiatives in the field of combating migration, but also the fact that the *migrant*

56 KSH (2015, 20 June), *2015/47 Statisztikai tükör*, <https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/stattukor/menekult14.pdf>

57 M.Sarkadi Nagy (2017, 22 January), *Így lett a párizsi terrortámadások elkövetőinek budapesti útjaiból az egész országot bekamerázó Szitakötő-projekt*, *Atlatso*, <https://atlatso.hu/kozugy/2021/12/07/igy-lett-a-parizsi-terrortamadasok-elkovetoinnek-budapesti-utjaibol-az-egesz-orsszagot-bekamerazo-szitakoto-projekt/>

58 E.g. Mandiner (2017, 16 March), *Szijjártó: Megbukott a félmegoldáson alapuló brüsszeli politika!*, https://migracio.mandiner.hu/cikk/20170316_szijjarto_megbukott_a_felmegoldason_alapulo_brusszeli_politika

crisis in Hungary has been institutionalised. By this I mean specific legal and constitutional actions taken by the authorities. Hungary has been under a state of emergency due to mass migration since 2015. It is extended every March and September, each time for six months. The legal basis for these decisions is becoming increasingly questionable, as the prerequisites related to the number of migrants who should cross Hungary's border to enable those in power to speak of a mass threat are not met. What's more, in 2018, migration laws were tightened once again, when a package of laws called 'Stop Soros' was passed, which also criminalised aiding people who crossed the border illegally (you can go to jail for a year for doing so). It also, partially, changed the wording of the Constitution. The problem, however, is that the Hungarian authorities have changed the method of presenting border-crossing statistics to meet these requirements. Now people are apprehended not so much when reaching the border fence, but also when staying near it. All old statistics have been removed from the police websites, those from 2015 are not available at all⁵⁹. For the point is that the *migration crisis* in Hungary ended when the border crossing between Hungary and Serbia in Röszke was closed. And there's no doubt the crisis was effectively ended.

In Hungary, the topic of migration is evoked before every election, at every level of the government – the National Assembly, the European Parliament or local government. The rhetoric of those in power boils down to exposing the 'Soros plan', which is to attract a million migrants to Europe with the goal of stripping Europeans (primarily Hungarians) of their identity. This element has also been picked up in Poland by the United Right. An important component of both ruling parties' narratives was to emphasise their Christian roots. Both Poland and Hungary were to become the last bastions of value in the region. This communication strategy was then expanded to include elements related to protection from LGBTQI⁶⁰.

The Polish public space was dominated by the message related to the fact that Beata Szydło's government terminated all commitments related to the migrant relocation mechanism (so-called quotas⁶¹). Multiculturalism and the United Right's opposition to

59 This can be seen here: https://www.police.hu/hu/hirek-es-informaciok/hatarinfo/illegalis-migracio-alakulas-a-weekly_migration_created%5Bmin%5D=2015-01-01+00%3A00%3A00&weekly_migration_created%5Bmax%5D=2016-01-01+00%3A00%3A00

60 E.g. Rudziński, L. (2021, 2 July), 'Kaczyński ogłasza wspólną deklarację z Orbánem i Le Pen dot. przyszłości UE.' ('Kaczyński announces joint declaration with Orbán and Le Pen on future of EU.'). *I.pl.*, <https://i.pl/kaczynski-oglasza-wspolna-deklaracje-z-orbanem-i-le-pen-dot-przyszlosci-ue/ar/c1-15693069>

61 Stolarczyk, M. (2017), 'Stanowisko Polski wobec kryzysu migracyjno-uchodźczego Unii Europejskiej' (Poland's position on the European Union's migrant and refugee crisis), *Krakowskie Studia Międzynarodowe (Cracow International Studies)*, 2 (15–41)

it have been running through the media. In Poland, however, the topic of migration was not dominant in the election campaigns. Moreover, its exposure in the case of the local elections of 21 October 2018 proved counterproductive. A few days before the vote, the Law and Justice party unveiled a spot accusing local government officials associated with the Civic Platform of wanting to open cities to migrants⁶². The Commissioner for Human Rights, recognising that the spot deliberately amplified fear of migrants and refugees, has requested the Prosecutor's Office to initiate criminal proceedings for incitement to hatred based on national, ethnic and religious differences. The issue sparked outrage and led to mobilization – but of opposition voters. It can be concluded that in Warsaw it led to a high turnout and a victory for Rafał Trzaskowski (Civic Platform) in the first round. The Prosecutor's Office has repeatedly discontinued and – after complaints from the Commissioner for Human Rights – reopened the investigation into the spot⁶³.

The activities of the Hungarian authorities, overtly discriminatory in terms of nationality, have not been the subject of any investigation by the prosecutor's office. Hungary's equivalent of the Commissioner for Human Rights has not sided with immigrants and refugees. Even when the Hungarian government decided in April 2015 to hold a 'national consultation on immigrants and terrorism'⁶⁴ (a form of a 'referendum' held by correspondence). It was symptomatic to juxtapose immigrants and terrorists. Among other questions, respondents were asked whether they thought Hungary would become a target of terrorist attacks in the coming years, whether they were aware that the number of illegal immigrants had recently increased 20-fold, and whether they agreed with the statement that immigrants posed a threat to Hungarian laws and jobs. The consultation was accompanied by an outdoor campaign with the slogan 'If you come to Hungary...'. The billboards ended the sentence with constructs addressed to newcomers, such as 'you won't take away Hungarians' jobs', '(...) you must obey our laws', '(...) you must respect our culture'⁶⁵.

62 The spot can be viewed at: https://twitter.com/pisorgpl/status/1052530980190334977?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1052530980190334977%7Ctwgr%5E056896c062c054ddc-9de718ee3d96fd7e8825058%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.tvp.info%2F39508561%2F-nowy-spot-wyborczy-pis-porusza-problem-nielegalnych-uchodzcow-i-bezpieczenstwa-polakow

63 Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (2021, 4 February), 'Będzie ponowne śledztwo ws. spotu wyborczego PiS z 2018 r.' ('There will be a reinvestigation of the 2018 Law and Justice election spot'), <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/content/po-zazaleniu-rpo-ponowne-sledztwo-ws-spotu-wyborczego-pis>

64 Nemzeti konzultáció a bevándorlásról és a terrorizmusról (2015), <https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/download/4/d3/c0000/Bev%20konzultacio%20eredmenyei.pdf#!DocumentBrowse>

65 Hvg.hu (2015, 4 June), Kiderült, milyen feliratok lesznek még a kormány óriásplakátjain. https://hvg.hu/itthon/20150604_Kiderult_milyen_feliratok_lesznek_meg_a_k

Building identity through hate

In 2016, a referendum was held in Hungary, against the constitution, to reject the relocation mechanism. Why was it unconstitutional? For the mechanism was enacted as an international document, and no referendum can be held with respect to such documents. However, the favour of the judiciary, which was taken over by the Fidesz-KDNP coalition, made it possible to hold that plebiscite⁶⁶. The referendum turned out to be a disaster in terms of turnout, as somewhat only about 40% of those eligible participated. Moreover, higher turnout was not observed in those places where refugees actually appeared on the streets; a slightly higher-than-average turnout was found only at the border with Austria. However, the government communicated that it would respect the opinion of Hungarians and act as if it had full social legitimacy. Orbán described 2017 as ‘the year of the fight against the European Union’, during which among other things EU’s migration policy was criticised⁶⁷.

Orbán’s adoption of the anti-immigration narrative was also aimed at strengthening identity elements. Although it seems improbable, at the height of the migration crisis, ‘migrants’ ranked low in surveys related to fears, only to then quickly rise to the top three,⁶⁸ which was the result of state propaganda efforts. This can be seen, for example, in the studies cited by Jarosław Kopeć in his text, which were based on the YouGov report for the LENA consortium⁶⁹. 34% of Hungarians and 39% of Poles thought too many migrants had come to their country. When asked about the EU as a whole, 75% of Hungarians and 65% of Poles, respectively, viewed the situation negatively (the survey was conducted in December 2021, at a time of increased migration pressure on the Polish border). What’s more, 57% of Hungarians and 41% of Poles believed that immigrants did not want to integrate. In Hungary, fears about the possible annihilation of the Hungarian identity were played on. Viktor Orbán spoke of building a parallel society by migrants in order to defeat the native one. According to the survey, 57% of Hungarians believed that migration was a threat to identity. 49% of Poles were

66 Magyari, P. (2016, 3 May), Kúria: Lehet népszavazást tartani a kvótáról, *444.hu*. <https://444.hu/2016/05/03/kuria-lehet-nepszavazast-tartani-a-kvotarol>

67 Farkas, Gy. (2017, 22 November), Rekordot döntött a nemzeti konzultáció, *24.hu*. <https://24.hu/belfold/2017/11/22/rekordot-dontott-a-nemzeti-konzultacio/>

68 Boros, T. (ed.) (2018), *A Magyar Rémálom, Milyen félelmek élnek a Magyar társadalom?* Budapest: FES, <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/14556.pdf>

69 Kopeć, J. (2021, 21 December), Survey for LENA: ‘Polacy, Węgrzy i Europejczycy z Zachodu o imigracji i murach na granicy.’ (‘Poles, Hungarians and Western Europeans on immigration and walls at the border.’), *Big-Data Wyborcza.pl*, https://biqdata.wyborcza.pl/biqdata/7,159116,27945242,na-imigrantow-inaczzej-patrzy-siew-polsce-i-na-wegrzech-inaczzej.html?_ga=2.40297954.1760006837.1677413823-57392900.1676895899#S.embed_article-K.C-B.1-L.1.zw

of a similar opinion. At the same time, 71% of Hungarians supported the construction of a fence on the EU border (58% of Poles) as a protection against illegal migration⁷⁰.

In the Hungarian narrative, migration is still a far greater threat than the phenomenon of war. In Poland, after February 2022 all public attention was focused on security issues. The subject of migration is not discussed at all, and the open hearts of Poles have allowed them to welcome millions of Ukrainians into their homes, as well as support them in various ways⁷¹. These, however, from the very beginning were not treated as migrants, but something along the lines of 'brothers in need'.

A theme for years to come

Migrants have played and continue to play a very important role in the Hungarian public space. In Poland, the topic of migration has appeared, however, it has not been able to antagonise the public, and has not become a catalyst influencing the electoral decisions of Poles to a greater extent. This is largely due to history as well as the Polish identity and the openness to another human being. In Hungary, on the other hand, the problem of illegal immigration is still politically exploited, despite the fact that the scale of the phenomenon is incomparable to that of 2015. Over the years, the state has changed the ways in which statistics are presented to make them look more dramatic and justify the authorities' actions. Migration in Hungary has become an indispensable element of the political space that will continue to bring Fidesz voter support for years to come.

70 In this context, it is also worth mentioning that there are two fences on the Hungarian-Serbian border, with one of them already being upgraded by being raised by nearly two meters.

71 E.g. Osiecki, G., Żółciak, T. (2022, 13 November), 'Staliśmy się państwem dwunarodowym. Mieszka u nas już 2 mln osób z Ukrainy.' ('We have become a binational state. We already have 2 million people from Ukraine living with us.') *Forsal*, <https://forsal.pl/gospodarka/demografia/artykuly/8585141,polska-polityka-migracyj-na-uchodzcy-z-ukrainy.html>

[INTERVIEW]

IN TIME BEFORE THE BORDER GUARD

Joanna Łopat talks with **Olga Perkowska**

You started helping refugees in October 2021. You then went to the Polish-Belarusian border. What did you do there?

I went to Podlasie with a group of friends. Most of the people were artists – a graphic designer, a director, a painter. We had no experience at all. We simply wanted to help, because we couldn't stand idly by and watch what was happening there. While still in Warsaw, we did a fundraiser and bought food, thermoses, and heaters for the amount we raised. With such packages we would go to the forest and deliver aid there. We acted from the bottom up, without connections to any organization. Later, we created Stowarzyszenie Podróżnych Ugości (Association 'Host People on the Move').

The autumn of 2021 marked the difficult beginnings of a crisis that continues to this day. How do you recall that time in Podlasie?

It was a surreal experience. Temperatures were falling below zero, and people were hiding in the forests. On top of that, there were a lot of police checks. Uniformed officers made it difficult to help those in need. At that time, there was still no wall on the border, but there was a zone you were not allowed to enter. And it was from there that we received information about people in need of urgent help. It was already clear back then that one had to get in time before the Border Guard, because the border guards were not helping, but pushing the refugees back to Belarus.

The push-backs were hard to believe. On top of that, people were convinced that the border guards were protecting them and the borders. Activists were treated like criminals.

I think it was a psychological game. People felt they were doing something illegal, because the police controlled everyone every now and then. Cars were stopped and

searched. The officers talked to us as if we were doing something wrong. This atmosphere was heavy. This goes for both activists and residents of Podlasie.

The government media, the Border Guard and later also the clergy – in cooperation with the uniformed services – encouraged them to turn refugees in to the border guards. Some people believed that the aid was illegal.

Yes. I recall a situation that made a huge impression on me. In one of the villages, we were approached by a lady who sensed that we were activists, so she confided that some – I think she used the term – ‘aliens’ had come here the day before and that she had given them food and something to drink. She insisted that she hadn’t called the Border Guards, because she had already known it was wrong. That it could mean deportation to Belarus. ‘And everyone just wants to live,’ she repeated. And while she was saying that, a tractor drove by, and then she said: ‘Oh he calls them, and that lady over there, from that house – she doesn’t.’ This atmosphere of division was bizarre. In one village, there were two camps. And then these refugees were turned in by someone. Border guards came and took them away. Those callers believed the authorities’ narrative that refugees were staying there illegally and were dangerous.

That anti-refugee narrative escalated until it took on a ghastly form. Perhaps the best example was the conference of the Interior Minister, who argued that refugees on the Belarusian border are terrorists with paedophilic and zoophilic tendencies.⁷²

I think this anti-refugee image has been built up for years, and the conference you’re talking about is just part of a larger narrative. A part that merged with the election campaign and frightening people with refugees in general. It certainly worked on the imagination of many people. Because for them, in general, contact with another human being is difficult. We live in a homogeneous country with many stereotypes. And these stereotypes are reinforced by the narrative of this government. They send the society a signal: It is OK to think of refugees as a threat. As a result, almost every

72 In September 2021, at a press conference, Interior Minister Mariusz Kamiński, Minister of National Defense Mariusz Błaszczak and Commander of the Border Guard Major General Tomasz Praga, presented photos from cell phones seized at the border and memory cards found to prove that refugees infiltrating Poland have contacts with ISIS terrorists, the Taliban and Russian services. In addition, materials were shown that purported to indicate that immigrants were people with ‘sexual disorders related to paedophilia and zoophilia’. A feature by government TV titled ‘He raped a cow and wanted to go to Poland?’ became popular in the media. Shortly thereafter, independent journalists determined that the images presented there were fabricated and came from an old pornographic film.

person I work with now has experienced racism and discrimination. But I think such things have happened and will continue to happen also without this conference.

Before I ask about your current work with migrants and refugees, I'd like you to talk about your involvement in helping at the centres.

Supporting people in closed-type centres was the next step we took after our activities in the forest. Because once you manage to protect them from a push-back (and this often happens thanks to the involvement of activists, male and female lawyers and after parliamentary interventions), they end up in closed-type centres. And there, as it soon became apparent, essentials such as clothing, food, toiletries, or simply phones are in short supply. Since phones that have a camera are forbidden in the centres, you have to send them old generation phones. In these centres, there are men, women, sometimes whole families with young children. And they, after this traumatic experience in the forest, are subjected to another shock – isolation as if they were in prison. Because these closed-type centres function like prisons. Migrants and refugees are in confinement without any help or psychological support. Many people are depressed. There are suicide attempts. All their previous traumas resurface and intensify there. This is extremely difficult.

But they eventually get out from these 'prisons'. After varying lengths of time. Sometimes even after several months. And then again help is needed. That's when people like you show up.

That's right. They often leave these centres with PTSD⁷³ (post-traumatic stress disorder) and without psychological help are unable to start functioning efficiently. They are not self-reliant and cannot rely on state, systemic assistance. Of course, there are open centres where they can live after leaving the closed-type centres, but few people want to be there. Because staying in yet another centre makes them unable to function normally. Also, because most of them are far from cities. Leaving a centre is an important step on the way to independence. It gives them the feeling that they finally – at least partially – have a say in their own lives.

What is their status after they leave a closed-type centre?

73 There is a provision under which people with PTSD can't be in detention, but, in reality, no one adheres to it and no psychological examination is conducted

All are in the process of applying for international protection. That is, they are waiting for a decision on whether asylum will be granted to them. Often these are people who have already had one or two refusals that they have appealed. And they fear deportation. They are under constant stress related to this procedure. And they are really waiting a very long time.

This procedure starts with an initial application, then there is an interview at the Office for Foreigners, and there they have to prove that they experienced persecution in their country of origin?

That's right. Or that they come from a country in conflict. But this, too, is not always the deciding argument in granting asylum. Sometimes I find it difficult to understand the logic behind how the services operate and how protection is granted. Even those who present evidence that they would be in danger in their country of origin wait, or their applications are rejected. In general, the norm is that all applications from people of Iraqi origin are rejected.

In such a situation, can they take a job or rent an apartment?

In theory, they can sign a contract, find an apartment and a job, but in practice few people want to rent an apartment to a non-white person or hire a non-Polish-speaker. Let me cite a classic situation. I call the number from the ad and ask if the apartment is still available for rent. The answer is 'yes'. When I say that it's for a person from abroad, it's already 'maybe', and when I ask about renting it to a person from Iraq, the conversation ends with 'goodbye'. Because of these difficulties, refugees fall into the snares of dishonest real estate agents or employers who do not pay their salaries. They have a temporary ID, but cannot open a bank account. They have to ask someone to give them their account number and rely on their honesty. It's hard to find your way around, but it's easy to be deceived.

This situation probably became even more complicated in February 2022, when more refugees arrived in Poland – from Ukraine. Also looking for housing and jobs.

It was a strange moment. Because the anti-refugee narrative had already been running for months and it was hard to trigger people's desire to help. And in that case suddenly everything has changed. The attitude of the authorities and the public towards refugees from Ukraine was dramatically different – people literally rushed to

help them. It was unimaginable for us; it was a shock and a bittersweet experience. But I support anyone who comes to me for help.

Have you had moments of doubt?

I know that what I am doing makes sense. That's why I don't have moments of doubt. Rather, moments of frustration. Because I feel that activists have to replace the whole system of state aid. And at the same time, we have limited resources – both human and financial. It is simply hard to meet this challenge. Added to this is the thought that refugees are still dying on the Polish-Belarusian border. And they can count on no other help than that of grassroots activists.

Have you experienced any situations when you felt particularly strongly that what you are doing is important, that it makes sense?

There is this boy I met in the Polish forest. He was among those hiding there for thirty days. That boy was pushed back six times. He has experienced violence from Belarusian border guards more strongly than others because he is black. When I met him, he was on the verge of exhaustion. We managed to help him apply for asylum and avoid a pushback. He ended up in a centre, from which he left after a year and now we are still in touch. He has an apartment and a job, and while it's still difficult and there is still a tremendous number of challenges ahead, his story is proof that my efforts and those of many other activists make sense.

Olga Perkowska – born in 1996, co-founder of Stowarzyszenie Podróżnych Ugościć (Association 'Host People on the Move'), which has been supporting refugees from the Polish-Belarusian border since October 2021. Currently, a case worker at the Conflict Kitchen Foundation. She studied Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and has been learning Arabic for 2 years.

Izbicko
Stubendorf

CHAPTER IV

**NATIONAL
AND ETHNIC
MINORITIES**



TWO TALES OF ANTI-MINORITY APPROACHES

Edit Zgut-Przybylska

Thirty-two years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, multiple crises led to the destabilisation of political systems in Central and Eastern Europe. Hungary and Poland are powerful examples of this region taking a political turn towards not only extreme conservative but also anti-liberal⁷⁴ politics. The dominant strategy of radical right-wing parties was that they traditionally mobilised against historical minorities, such as the Roma, the Jews, and national minorities. Given that Hungary and Poland are rather homogeneous countries⁷⁵, Fidesz-KDNP and PiS (Law and Justice) could build momentum on the refugee crisis in 2015 by capitalising on existing prejudices. The political exploitation of moral panic-mongering contributed to their electoral successes in Hungary and Poland⁷⁶.

They combine nationalist and ultraconservative ideas in a catch-all style, weaponizing migration and minority rights. Riding the wave of ‘anti-others’ has been closely linked with the escalation of culture wars and the renewal of social conservatism. While it eventually brought them closer to the Western radical right-wing parties, xenophobia has risen in Hungary and Poland⁷⁷.

The exclusionary populist impact is traceable in their political discourses, institutional reforms, and policy measures. However, their approaches towards national minorities

74 Coman, R., Volintiru, C. (2021). Anti-Liberal Ideas and Institutional Change in Central and Eastern Europe. *European Politics and Society*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2021.1956236>

75 Up until 1920, Hungary was a multi-ethnic state where Hungarians made up 50% of the population. Then the Treaty of Trianon transformed the country into a rather homogeneous state where Hungarians comprised 90% of all citizens. Similarly, Poland was a multinational and multi-ethnic country for centuries. But by the end of the second World War, Poland also became an ethnic monolith, with over 95% of its population consisting of Polish Catholics.

76 Kende, A., Krekó, P. (2020). Xenophobia, Prejudice, and Right-Wing Populism in East-Central Europe. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 34, 29–33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2019.11.011>

77 Cichocki, P., Jabkowski, P. (2019). Immigration Attitudes in the Wake of the 2015 Migration Crisis in the Visegrád Group Countries. *Intersections*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v5i1.480>

are different – while the United Right coalition (which is how PiS and its allies call their coalition) mostly fuels sentiments against the German minority, Fidesz puts the most emphasis on the largest ethnic minority, the Roma.

It does not happen in a vacuum: Fidesz and PiS have framed the politics that fit them into a broader global populist trend⁷⁸, challenging liberal democracy and exploiting anti-establishment sentiments. Right-wing populists in Central and Eastern Europe built their legitimacy on the notion that the 1989 transition was a failure, therefore, a new ‘illiberal transition’ was needed – which practically led to the capture of the democratic institutions.

Instrumentalising national/ethnic minorities

Differentiating between ethnic Hungarians and ‘others’ has been central to Fidesz’s rhetoric since 2010. It is centred around the idea of an ethnically and culturally homogeneous nation, which serves to unify the conservative base of the party⁷⁹. The Orbán government has been constantly deepening its connections with far-right actors both rhetorically, ideologically and in practical terms. During his inauguration in May 2022, Viktor Orbán gave a speech in the Hungarian Parliament, touching upon the elements of the great replacement theory⁸⁰. Similarly, during his annual summer speech in Băile Tuşnad in Romania, the Hungarian Prime Minister spoke of ‘mixed race’ societies in Western Europe that he does not want Hungary to become⁸¹. After hosting the first European offshoot of the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Budapest, he also spoke at the CPAC organised in Texas, where he reinforced his views⁸². His rhetoric has been based on fears about security for years, which amplified social anxieties and generally fed into the rejection of minorities.

78 Cianetti, L., Dawson, J., Hanley, S. (2018). Rethinking ‘Democratic Backsliding’ in Central and Eastern Europe – Looking beyond Hungary and Poland. *East European Politics*, 34(3), 243–256.

79 Bozóki, A., Simon, E. (2019). Two Faces of Hungary: From Democratization to Democratic Backsliding. In: Ramet, S. P. & C. M. Hassenstab (Eds.), *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 221–248.

80 V. Orbán’s speech in the National Assembly on May 24, 2022. <https://miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-beszede-a-miniszterek-bemutatasan-2/>;

81 V. Orbán’s speech in Bale Tusnad on July 23, 2022. <https://miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-eloadasa-a-xxxi-balvanyosi-nyari-szabadegyetem-es-diaktaborban/>

82 Tharor, I. (2022, September 4). Analysis | Orbán at CPAC Brings the ‘Far-Right International’ into Focus. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/04/orban-hungary-far-right-international-cpac-conservative/>

As for the political representation of national/ethnic minorities, the Hungarian model is relatively original in the region⁸³. It does not recognise the plural electoral law and distinguishes between small and middle-size minorities⁸⁴. They can be represented directly in two ways in the Hungarian National Assembly. One of them is the preferential mandate, which is one of the most unjust and least-known elements of the Hungarian electoral system introduced by Fidesz in 2011. It requires 25% of the number of votes that are normally required for the total number of seats available in the parliament – around 25 000 votes. The problem is that the small number of registered minority voters is an obvious indication that most of the minorities will not reach the preferential quota. It is beyond coincidence that only the relatively large and well-organised German minority has been able to obtain such a mandate in 2018 and 2022. It was achieved by the same candidate who was previously a Fidesz-KDNP local councillor, which means that he already belonged to the constitutional parliamentary majority of the ruling elite⁸⁵.

Another way to be represented is to have an advocate/spokesperson who did not pass the preferential quota but came first on the list of candidates from a minority's National Self-Government. They do not have voting rights but a consultative status: the person can speak during the plenary whenever there is a relevant issue on the agenda. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) eventually ruled that the shortcomings of the minority voting system in Hungary constitute a violation of the right to non-discrimination as it leads to the disenfranchisement of minority voters⁸⁶. Furthermore, it provides a window for clientelist corruption – in the previous parliamentary cycle, the Roma Advocate was Félix Farkas, a key ally to Fidesz, promised state contracts for the members of the NSG in return for political support towards the ruling elite⁸⁷.

While the Orbán government does not explicitly target registered national minorities, its populism developed an exclusionary, anti-Roma edge. It includes segregated

83 The recognised communities in Hungary are: Armenian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Greek, German, Polish, Roma (Romani), Romanian, Ruthenian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, and Ukrainian.

84 Halász, I. (2022). Representation of National and Ethnic Minorities in the Hungarian Parliament. *Studia Iuridica Lublinensia*, 31(5), 67–84. <https://doi.org/10.17951/sil.2022.31.5.67–84>

85 Halász, I. (2022).

86 Kállai, P. (2022, December 20). Preferential non-representation? Case of Bakirdzi and E.C. v Hungary. *Strasbourg Observers*. <https://strasbourgobservers.com/2022/12/20/preferential-non-representation-case-of-bakirdzi-and-e-c-v-hungary/>

87 Zgut, E. (2022, February 2). The Orbán Regime Intimidates Roma Community to Win the Elections. *Visegrad Insight*. <https://visegradinsight.eu/the-orban-regime-intimidates-roma-community-to-win-the-elections/>

housing and education within a broader strategy ‘to steer popular sentiments of dispossession and disenfranchisement against internal and external “enemies”’⁸⁸. In 2019 the government launched a public campaign against the Roma community by rejecting a court decision on compensating Roma students whose education suffered due to racial segregation. By claiming that the Roma get a ‘significant sum without having to work for it in any way’⁸⁹. Viktor Orbán invoked massive stereotypes about the largest officially recognised ethnic minority group in Hungary. Capturing the media in a top-down, centralised fashion played a central role in pursuing a populist narrative against minorities and migrants.

The response of the Hungarian government and radical groups to the European ‘migration crisis’ brought about a significant shift in public discourse in 2015. As Political Capital pointed out, the anti-immigration stance might have ‘acted as a veil covering up misgivings which never went away about other minorities’⁹⁰. Motives behind anti-Semitism and anti-Roma sentiments are highly similar in Hungary, where the feeling of national superiority is based on the notion of collective victimhood. It is exploited not by a disdain for other groups but mainly by a yearning for security (and partly cultural security). Should the demand for security and predictability increase during a crisis, it also increases the importance of one’s own group and its norms; therefore, all external groups necessarily are seen as breaching these norms⁹¹.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that contrary to its harsh anti-refugee policy, the Orbán government promised to help Ukrainians crossing the Hungarian borders. But the ‘demolished’ asylum system made it harder for Ukrainians to integrate. Furthermore, the Hungarian Prime Minister avoided naming Vladimir Putin as being responsible for the war and confronted the Ukrainian government instead, which generated significant discomfort among the Ukrainian minorities/refugees in Hungary⁹².

88 Dániel, S., Samu, B. (2020, January 15). Orbán: Compensating Romas for school segregation is “unjust” for the rest of the community. *Index.hu*. https://index.hu/english/2020/01/15/gyongyospata_roma_school_segregation_hungary_viktor_orban/

89 Dániel, S., Samu, B. (2020, January 15).

90 Juhász, A., et al. (2017). *The Year of Rearrangement. The Populist Right and the Far-Right in Contemporary Hungary*. Budapest: Political Capital Kft. and Social Development Institute Kft. https://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/Atrendezodes%20Eve_ENG_oldalpar.pdf

91 Juhász, A., et al. (2017).

92 France24 (2022, May 20). Hungary’s neutral war stance puts off Ukraine refugees. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220520-hungary-s-neutral-war-stance-puts-off-ukraine-refugees>

‘Camouflaged German allegiance’

Poland has followed a similar path after PiS won the elections in 2015, and Jarosław Kaczyński branded the liberal notions of democracy as a Western imposition. The government pushed a strongly anti-liberal agenda of rejecting personal freedoms, in particular pluralism and multiculturalism, same-sex marriage, gender, and euthanasia. This approach mirrored a collective fear of losing national identity, the West’s excessive influence, and its cultural hegemony⁹³. PiS considers Catholic and national values to be the fundamental basis of the Polish state. Its party program between 2007–2009 addressed issues regarding national and ethnic minorities⁹⁴ incidentally. It also perceived and presented the manifestation of Silesia, as well as, to some extent, the political activity of the German minority as ‘just another way of defining oneself other than as Polish and presumably the acceptance of camouflaged German allegiance’⁹⁵. PiS also criticised the opposition Civic Platform (PO) party for ‘strongly underlining the importance of the regions, of which a particular aspect is Donald Tusk’s emphasis on his Kashubian identity’⁹⁶.

The European ‘refugee crisis’ further shifted the mainstream public discourse in Poland. The United Right coalition fuelled an ‘anti-other’ and anti-migrant rhetoric, which went hand in hand with a Eurosceptic agenda. The exclusionary edge towards German minorities became the most prominent both in terms of legislation and the government’s rhetoric. The United Right can kill two birds with one stone – polarise native Polish citizens and others, and pursue a strongly anti-German approach.

The ruling elite claims that Germany has never truly accounted for the crimes against the Polish Nation committed between 1939–1945. It could be also linked to the so-called ‘antemurale’ narrative of the Polish conservative political thinking – that Poland

93 Kotwas, M., Kubik, J. (2019). Symbolic Thickening of Public Culture and the Rise of Right-Wing Populism in Poland. *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures*, 33(2), 435–471. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325419826691>

94 Poland’s minorities are classified into three main categories: national minorities, mostly defined as groups associated with a nearby kin-state (German, Czech, Slovak, Ukrainian, Belorussian, Lithuanian, Russian, along with Armenian and Jewish), ethnic minorities (Tatar, Karaim, Lemko and Roma) and regional minorities (Kashub). Silesians, while comprising the largest minority group, are not recognised as a national minority.

95 Bąk-Pitucha, A. (2021). The policy of the Polish authorities towards national and ethnic minorities after 1989. *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, 19(3), 205–229. <https://doi.org/10.36874/riesw.2021.3.9>

96 Kaczyński, J. (2011, March 31). Jarosław Kaczyński: „Raport o stanie Rzeczypospolitej”. *wPolityce.pl*. <https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/11772-jaroslaw-kaczynski-raport-o-stanie-rzeczypospolitej-tylko-u-nas-fragmenty-programowej-publikacji-prezesa-pis>

is protecting Christianity both from the East (Russia) and the West (Germany)⁹⁷. By depicting Germany as an external threat, the public broadcaster is constantly fuelling conspiracies that the leader of the opposition Donald Tusk is a German collaborator who would undermine Polish sovereignty⁹⁸.

The rhetoric was followed by legislative actions. In a controversial move, the governing coalition issued to cut by two-thirds the number of hours of German lessons provided⁹⁹ to children from the country's German minority. Furthermore, the parliament reduced the annual funding for teaching Poland's 150,000-strong German minority by 40 million zloty (EUR 8.8 million) and instead, allocated money to teaching Polish to members of the Polish diaspora in Germany¹⁰⁰.

In 2016, the government abolished the anti-racism committee, a state council that was tasked with combating racism, despite an increase in hate crimes in the country. Their reasoning was that 'the council proved to be rather inefficient', and there were 'more efficient' bodies that would carry on the work¹⁰¹. The body was established by the previous centre-right government (led by Civic Platform), and the decision to dissolve it was condemned by the opposition and Poland's ombudsman¹⁰².

National minorities have been granted certain privileges with regard to the Polish electoral law. According to the electoral code, committees of national minorities do not have to meet the threshold of 5% of valid votes during parliamentary elections. However, lately, there have been attempts to restrict the political representation of

97 Stevens, G. R. Jr. (2016). *German Perceptions of Poland and Russia in the Early Modern Period*. [Master's thesis, Clemson University]. Clemson: TirgerPrints. https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3375&context=all_theses

98 Tilles, D. (2021, August 10). Polish state TV provides almost 100% negative coverage of opposition leader, finds study. *Notes from Poland*. <https://notesfrompoland.com/2021/08/10/polish-state-tv-provides-almost-100-negative-coverage-of-opposition-leader-finds-study/>

99 Tilles, D. (2022, February 10). Poland "discriminating against German minority" with funding cuts, says German government official. *Notes from Poland*. <https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/02/10/poland-discriminating-against-german-minority-with-funding-cuts-says-german-government-official>

100 As for the context, Poland has been accusing Germany of breaking the 1991 Treaty of Good Neighbourship, which stipulates that both minorities are to be treated equally in both countries. The Polish government demanded that Germany establishes a federal fund for teaching Polish as a native language, claiming that there was a large disproportion between the support provided to the German minority in Poland and the help the Polish minority receives in Germany. As a result, the German government signalled in November 2022 that the Polish minority in Germany may benefit from the federal funds earmarked for teaching Polish as a native language. See more here: <https://tvpworld.com/64485103/germany-to-allocate-federal-funds-for-teaching-polish>

101 Sheftalovits, Z. (2016, May 5). Poland's PiS abolishes anti-racism body. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.eu/article/polands-pis-lae-and-justice-party-abolishes-anti-racism-body/>

102 Sheftalovits, Z. (2016, May 5).

minorities. United Poland (*Solidarna Polska*), the hard-right coalition partner to PiS led by the justice minister Zbigniew Ziobro, submitted a bill to abolish the arrangement under which German minorities could receive a seat in the Polish parliament. Their reasoning is that ‘the rules are an unjustified electoral privilege and brazen violation of the rule of law by the Germans’. Ziobro’s party also wants to end state funding for teaching German to children from the minority¹⁰³.

Kaczyński’s government is often trying to make use of the far-right by legitimising their radical messages and, in so doing, legitimises the extreme-right subculture. Kaczyński once famously said, ‘To the right of us, only the wall’ when describing PiS’ goal of rallying all conservative voters in Poland¹⁰⁴. Seeking to capitalise on its popularity, the representatives of the ruling elite started to celebrate the country’s Independence March on November 11, traditionally organised by Polish extremist and international far-right organisations¹⁰⁵. PiS party leaders defended the event against accusations that it was a fascist rally, and party members regularly joined the march.¹⁰⁶ It raised serious concerns that the government is implicitly encouraging and reinforcing neo-fascist groups¹⁰⁷, fostering anti-immigrant, ‘anti-others’ and anti-EU rhetoric.

State-funded Polish media (public TV and radio broadcasters) and private media supporting PiS have played a key role in encouraging the above-mentioned discourse. They reflected prejudice and promoted the ruling elite agenda to attack its opponents. According to the Never Again Association, the anti-Semitic discourse has been strengthened in the public sphere and social media, in particular during the legislative process of revisions to the Code of Administrative Procedure, affecting the restitution process¹⁰⁸.

103 Tilles, D. (2022, November 26). Bill to “end electoral privilege of German minority” submitted by party in Poland’s ruling coalition. *Notes from Poland*. <https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/11/26/bill-to-end-electoral-privilege-of-german-minority-submitted-by-party-in-polands-ruling-coalition/>

104 Ciobanu, C. (2019, November 11). Poland’s independence march is a litmus test of far-right support. *Balkan Insight*. <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/11/11/polands-independence-march-a-litmus-test-of-far-right-support/>

105 Euroactiv.com (2018, November 12). Poland holds centenary parade alongside far-right march. *Euractiv.com*. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/future-eu/news/poland-holds-centenary-parade-alongside-far-right-march/>

106 Kocyba, P., Lukianow, M. (2020). *The Right in the Streets: The Past and Present of the Polish March of Independence*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344672615_The_Right_in_the_Streets_The_Past_and_Present_of_the_Polish_March_of_Independence

107 Prior to the local elections in 2018, the far-right All Polish Youth issued death certificates for 11 liberal politicians from the opposition, including Paweł Adamowicz, who was killed later in Gdansk during the finale of the 27th Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity. Before that, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki appointed the former head of this radical organisation as the Deputy Minister for Digital Affairs. With his extremely strong social media outreach, Minister Adam Andruszkiewicz’s task would have been to channel and attract the anti-establishment, radical voters. See more here: <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/11/11/polands-independence-march-a-litmus-test-of-far-right-support/>

108 Office of International Religious Freedom (2021). Poland 2021 International Religious Freedom Report. U.S. Department of State.

Nevertheless, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has had a positive impact on the treatment of the Ukrainian minorities as a national group, which is a non-standard approach to refugees for PiS. Legislation, introduced on March 12, only covered Ukrainian nationals, causing much disappointment among, for example, the Belarusian community, who were also aiming at obtaining special rights¹⁰⁹.

True Poles and true Hungarians

While Polish and Hungarian history has been filled with 'us versus them' battles, the public discourses have increasingly focused on what it means to be a true Hungarian (*igaz(i) magyar*) or a true Pole (*prawdziwy Polak*) under Fidesz and PiS rule¹¹⁰. Their anti-liberal cocktail fell onto fertile soil, where the lack of social capital and trust in democratic institutions has been traditionally the lowest – even before the Eurozone crisis, let alone the refugee crisis. These governments successfully reflected the fears of social and cultural transformation by weaponizing migration and instrumentalising the crisis Europe had to face in a decade. National belonging indicates not only knowing who 'we' are but also recognising who the 'others' are. Consequently, national identity makes sense only through the contrast with the 'others'. In the interpretation of Fidesz and PiS, Hungarians and Poles are Christian, not Jewish or Muslim.

Fostering 'anti-liberal', populist, and majoritarian views eventually became a pretext to subvert democracy by undermining checks and balances and polarising societies to the extremes. This is a dangerous zero-sum game that lacks space for counterarguments and pluralism. It poses a serious threat to the quality of democracy, negatively impacts social cohesion, and undermines social stability and trust. Therefore, democratic forces need to re-establish and enforce a reconciliatory political culture to combat social and political polarisation.

They simply can't fight fire with fire. The opposition has to find a way to undercut the logic of exclusion in both countries. The Hungarian stakeholders should foster a better representation of marginalised ethnic groups in decision-making bodies, especially on the local level. Their Polish counterpart has to speak up against depriving

109 Babakova, O., et al. (2022). Who is a "true" refugee? On the limits of Polish hospitality. *CMR Spotlights*. <https://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Spotlight-JUNE-2022-1-2.pdf>

110 Goździak, E., M., Marton, P. (1994). Where the wild things were. *Electronics Education*, 1994(3), 7. <https://doi.org/10.1049/ee.1994.0068>

the German minorities of their rights to education and political representation. Although the term ‘liberal democracy’ was dragged into the mud by these regimes, democratic forces should embrace it as a badge of honour since the liberal pillars of democracy are indispensable to the democratic process itself. It refers to the utmost protection of minority rights, the equality of individuals, the constitutional restriction on executive power, and the democratic self-government of the people.

[iNTERVIEW]

THE SILESIAN REVOLUTION IS UNDERWAY

Joanna Łopat talks with Zbigniew Rokita

What does it mean to be a Silesian? How would Hanys – a resident of Silesia – explain this to a Goral woman – a non-resident of that region?

This is an identity that is experienced differently by different people. Some claim that their Silesian identity is part of their Polish identity, some feel exclusively Silesian and not Polish, some associate Silesian identity with German identity. And that's because Silesia was a land that belonged to different countries in the past and was always on some kind of borderland. As a result, an identity emerged, which is not a national identity – like Czech, Slovak or Polish – but a pre- or post-national identity. This is an identity that is not necessarily tied to a single country and a single language.

But to a specific location. In your book you invoke the words of Zbigniew Kadłubek who called Silesians settled nomads who ‘have been stuck in one place for a thousand years, only the countries in which they are stuck change’. Is this the identity of the borderland?

Today, it is not clear what Silesia separates from what. And even if this Silesian-Polish or Silesian-Lesser Poland border was one of the most durable borders in the history of the last millennium of Europe, Silesians have always been on the borderline. And the words of Zbigniew Kadłubek cited above capture that steady odyssey of Silesians. The countries we lived in changed frequently, and we were still living in one place.

And for you, what does it mean to be a Silesian?

I don't know. I can't handle such questions. That's probably why I'm a reporter and not a poet.

I got the impression that it was a source of embarrassment at first, and then a source of uniqueness.

In many parts of the world, and certainly of Europe and Poland, we are seeing the empowerment of peripheral identities. From Welsh to Montenegrin or Kazakh. These identities are becoming more assertive, separating themselves from the more dominant ones. And it is also the case with the Silesian identity. It's never been this good and this bad. That's good, because it is happening. A revolution is taking place, which is that the Silesian identity is no longer embarrassing. It got out of a folk-cabaret reserve. And that's bad, because never have so few people grown up in an organically Silesian culture as now. That is, brought elements of Silesian memory and language from home. We are being Polonised and we become Polonised. Although there is still a group of lunatics like me, who are trying to discover, strengthen and create that Silesian identity. This is the process of construction. I, on a whim, decided to construct my Silesian identity, although there is only one-eighth of the Silesian identity in my blood.

What nationality did you mark in the last Census?

Silesian. I feel Silesian, but of course also Polish. I lack the words to call it precisely. In Russian, for example, there is the word *Rossiisky* and the word *Rusky*, two words that show this nuance – civic and ethnic Russianness. In reference to us, in Polish, there are no such words. This creates confusion. Because how can one be Polish (as a Polish citizen, I am Polish), but at the same time declare another nationality? In a country that is said to be mono – mono-ethnic, mono-religious – this is difficult to understand.

You mentioned language, so I'll ask about language. Silesians have been fighting for their language to be recognized as a regional language, and when a bill to that effect was submitted to the Sejm two years ago, a memo drafted by the Interior Ministry leaked to the press. It stated, 'Recognition of the Silesian ethnolect as a regional language (...) may cause similar expectations in representatives of other regional groups. (...) Recognizing the existence of further dialects as regional languages could eventually lead to a paradoxical situation in which the society of the Republic of Poland would consist solely of speakers of separate regional languages without the existence of a national general language.' Why the fear of regional languages and especially the Silesian language?

This fear is based primarily on very little faith in the strength of the Polish language and the attractiveness of Polish culture. Meanwhile, the Polish identity and the Polish language are not threatened by anything. Many more languages can be

recognized – including Silesian, Kashubian, Lemko – but Polish will still be unthreatened. This is a paradox – various circles that articulate a belief in the unique strength of Polish culture behave as if they do not believe in this strength. I don't understand politicians and journalists repeating such absurdities. This is either due to lack of knowledge or bad will. But I understand the fear of people who do not know and are not obliged to know Silesian culture. If I wasn't interested in identities or history, and I was from, say, Białystok or Grudziądz, then of course I might be afraid of Silesians. Because if you hear about a grandfather in the Wehrmacht¹¹¹, about the Nazi army, about the fact that miners earn a lot, and yet they protest, on top of that they want autonomy, then you have every right to be afraid. The problem begins when people who have a socially responsible profession – politicians and journalists – talk such nonsense.

Let's focus on politicians. A Group for Silesian Language and Culture has been established in the Polish parliament. It is supported by all but the Law and Justice (PiS) and the far-right Confederation.

Yes. That's true. These parties do not even pretend that the Silesian language is an important topic for them. But perhaps there is some integrity in this attitude. I prefer if they tell me. Maybe PiS knows that it doesn't even have to pretend that it wants to recognize the Silesian language. Because if you look at the electoral maps, the municipalities where the most Silesians live have the highest support for Law and Justice.

Why?

I will try to answer by citing the results of the recent presidential election in the United States. In absolute numbers, women, black people and Hispanics cast the most votes for Trump. Intuition tells us that it should be the other way around, but these results show that voters are not guided by identity. It's possible that it's the same with Silesians. More important than emotions is whether a candidate will build a kindergarten or change taxes.

111 In 2005, during the presidential campaign, a Law and Justice politician, Jacek Kurski, told the media that 'Tusk's grandfather volunteered for the Wehrmacht'. This information became part of a campaign to discredit then-presidential candidate Donald Tusk. Tusk explained that his grandfather (like many Pomeranians at the time) was drafted into the Wehrmacht in 1944 after leaving a concentration camp, and served in the German army for just two months – from August to October – before ending up in the Polish Armed Forces in November.

Or change the (Silesian) Regional Cultural Institute into the Institute of Polish Thought. Or take away the subsidy from the social and cultural quarterly Fabryka Silesia (Silesia Factory). Or change the patron of one of the squares from a Silesian writer, Wilhelm Szewczyk, to Lech and Maria Kaczyński¹¹².

Yes, it's true that PiS is pursuing a policy of Polonisation and vulgar nationalism on many levels. And this should be clearly stated at the very beginning. On the other hand, each situation has its own peculiarities. Local politicians have their own phobias, sympathies and antipathies, often different from those at the national level.

The problem, however, is the specific sensitivity of Silesia. When Warsaw imposes on us – for example – Polish patrons of streets or squares, removing our own, historical associations are triggered – about exploitation, Polonisation, colonial attitude. Silesia is a region of special concern; it needs more empathy. Something that can be done in Łódź or Cracow, requires discussion here. Although words about a camouflaged German identity have brought more good than bad for Silesia¹¹³.

Why?

I'd rather we were insulted than ignored. Although the words were completely out of context. Kaczyński was not talking about Silesians, but about the Silesian Autonomy Movement¹¹⁴. Was he right? Of course, he wasn't. But his words mobilized Silesians. Some portion – I assume some thousands – declared Silesian nationality in the 2011 Census. A bit out of spite. As a happening.

And the statement about the grandfather serving in the Wehrmacht? Why is it not shocking in Silesia, but causing a stir in Poland? We were mostly shocked when, in 2005, the opposition attacked then-presidential candidate Donald Tusk, claiming that his grandfather had served in the armed forces of the Second Reich. Nearly a decade later, he is being reproached for that.

112 Wilhelm Szewczyk – novelist, publicist, poet and communist activist and member of the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic. Lech and Maria Kaczyński – the presidential couple. Both died in the Smolensk plane crash in 2010.

113 In 2011, a report was released to the media in which the chairman of the right-wing Law and Justice party wrote, 'Silesian identity is simply a certain way of dissociating oneself from the Polish identity and presumably simply adopting a camouflaged German option.' Jarosław Kaczyński excused himself and explained his words, stressing that he meant Silesians 'who reject Polish nationality'.

114 Silesian Autonomy Movement – an association formed in 1990, seeking the creation of an autonomous region within the historic boundaries of Upper Silesia

To answer this question, all you need to do is visit some Silesian homes. Sometimes in drawers and sometimes in frames on dressers stand photos of grandparents in uniforms with swastikas. Silesians – rather not voluntarily, as few voluntarily want to go to war – served in the German army, because it was their army and their country. What were they supposed to do? To go to the Świętokrzyski region and fight in the guerrillas? For us, these are not people who helped Hitler, but our grandparents, uncles. In general, they were not war criminals. But this is difficult to talk about. All the more so, because this does not only apply to Silesians. Poles have the common experience of serving in foreign armies, generally not of their own volition. So, it surprises me that this continues to be a problem.

Having recalled grandfather from the Wehrmacht, I wanted to ask about the relevance of this problem. Because this grandfather shows that history – especially Silesian history – is highly nuanced. In Silesia, the concepts of hero – enemy are not obvious. And perhaps this is where that misunderstanding of Silesians stems from. After all, in schools we are taught that the swastika has one meaning.

Not much has changed in the history books. We have been censoring our memory for years. The Polish hero-martyr narrative is very élitist. There is no place in it for Silesians. This is also reflected in the school reading list. There is nothing in there about Silesia, or this part of Poland – Wrocław, Szczecin, Olsztyn¹¹⁵. Our imagination is still organized by places that are not even within Poland's borders – namely Lviv or Vilnius. We do not fit into this narrative. Therefore, our memory, the memory of Silesians, is becoming Polonised very quickly. There are fewer and fewer of these specific elements of our identity. And on the one hand, the Silesian revolution is underway – topics that have never been discussed are becoming more and more popular. But it's still a story reserved for a handful of people. How else is it supposed to look in a country where there is no regional education?

And the Silesian memory has a specific construction. The three events that organize European memory – the Holocaust, communism and the German occupation during World War II – are experienced differently in Silesia. Because when we look at the map of anti-Semitic crimes, Silesia is not on it, because in Silesia Jews made up only 1%. In our region the German occupation did not take place, because it was our state, even if scabby. Communism was also received differently. In our case, there

115 Cities in former territories of Germany that became part of Poland after World War II.

was no dilemma as to whether it was liberation or enslavement. In our case, it was enslavement. Bad luck that in 1945 the Poles entered Gleiwitz (the German name for the city of Gliwice) after the Soviets, and that too in a not-so-good incarnation – Stalinist one.

Therefore, it is impossible to reach an agreement in the Polish-Silesian dialogue. These are very different memories, and very different experiences. One can intellectually understand what a grandfather in the Wehrmacht is, but still, even to me, a photo in a uniform decorated with swastikas is shocking.

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CHAPTER V

ROMA



POPULISM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SITUATION OF THE ROMA MINORITY

Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz and Michał P. Garapich

Despite the similarities, each populism usually has its own local mutation, and even given such close (i.e., before the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and Viktor Orbán’s pro-Russian declarations) relations between Fidesz and Law and Justice (PiS), common ideological elements, symbolism and world vision, there are important differences and variations in certain reference points in the strategy for generating public support.

At a general level, populism is an ideological and rhetorical way of doing politics that uses simplistic symbols or personifications of social forces like ‘the will of the people’, ‘the sovereign’, ‘the nation’, etc. In the processes of identifying what the will of the people is and what it is not, who is a member of the nation and who is not, a very important, anthropologists would say fundamental, role is played by the boundary separating ‘us’ from ‘them’. This is why attention is often paid to the processes of forming this boundary. Such demarcation can be characterized by various criteria – racial otherness, religious alienation, civilisational backwardness, class inferiority or gender specificity. This is why populisms of all varieties on a global scale share a common aversion to minorities of various kinds. Any populism that speaks on behalf of a sundry ‘majority’ needs some ‘minority’ to more effectively self-identify and define itself.

The Roma occupies a special place in this process. The extra-territorial largest minority without political state-forming aspirations, in its long historical persistence, was most often the victim of European experiments in modernization, assimilationism and enlightenment. And unfortunately, more often than not, for the Roma, these experiments ended badly, with extreme discrimination, slavery and genocide, extermination included. And yet, thanks to the fact that these experiments were fortunately not entirely successful for institutional reasons, but also due to the extraordinary proficiency and inventiveness of the Roma themselves – the Roma minority survived. Currently, there are, according to estimates, about 10–12 million of them in Europe,

but – importantly for our article – they are distributed differently. In Poland, there are no more than 35–40 thousand¹¹⁶, in Hungary their number is estimated to be between 500,000 and one million people, which is almost 8% of the total population.

When reflecting on the situation of Roma minorities in populist-ruled countries – such as Poland and Hungary – the above remarks should be kept constantly in mind. It is impossible to understand the history and present of Roma communities without pointing out the crucial role of the local historical and social context and the legacy of marginalization and racism. Despite some similarities, they are different, generating different reactions from the state, the majority of the population, as well as populist, nationalist ideologies.

The history of the Roma in Poland and Hungary is a reflection of the history of these countries, and already at the level of numbers one can see how different the conditions are. Being subjected to the Habsburg assimilation policy, in the name of which the Roma were sedentarised by force by taking away their children, horses, carts, forbidding them from practising traditional professions and using the Romani language, and ordering the name “Gypsy” to be replaced with “new Hungarian” took a much greater toll on the history of the Hungarian Roma than on the Polish ones. Only the Carpathian Roma communities in Spiš and Podhale were influenced by this policy, hence the fairly close cultural and linguistic affinity with the Roma in the former Austro-Hungarian territories. Compared to these rather drastic policies, the situation of the Roma, most of whom followed a nomadic lifestyle, was quite different in the rest of pre- and post-partition Poland, especially in the Borderlands, where the Roma enjoyed a relatively greater range of freedoms.

As the inheritor – in terms of cultural legacy – of Habsburg policies towards the Roma, Hungary is thus grappling with the still not fully discussed and socially resolved issue of the history of Roma slavery, which existed in the Wallachian and Moldovan territories for nearly 500 years, until the mid-19th century¹¹⁷. And while it de facto took place only in a few dominions of the Empire and in principle refers to the Roma in Romania to a greater extent, there is no doubt that it also echoes the situation of the Roma in Hungary today. Poland, of course, has its serfdom skeletons in the closet, but it’s not on a parallel with Roma slavery.

116 After 24 February 2022, 20–30 thousand Roma refugees from Ukraine, who decided to flee to Poland, currently residing in various cities, mainly Warsaw and Cracow, should be added to this number.

117 Mirga-Wójtowicz, E., Garapich, M.P. (2022). Patrz i nie zapomnij. *Muzeum Getta Warszawskiego*. <https://1943.pl/artukul/patrz-i-nie-zapomnij/>

At the same time, the Roma presence had a strong influence on the culture of nascent Hungarian nationalism in the 19th century. The weaving of Roma culture into the folk culture of Europe takes place at various levels, but it was in Roma music that intellectuals of the 19th century saw the spirit of the Hungarian people, hence the rather remarkable place of that music in Hungarian history, thanks in part to Ferenc Liszt's personal fascination with and patronage of Roma culture. There is no such equivalent in Polish history, and Polish intellectuals were interested in the Roma only as an exotic fringe, folklore or object of literary fantasy outside the national symbolic imaginarium. The Polish history of the 19th century and the nation-building processes of the Roma are completely absent. This difference in terms of history also has a darker dimension. During World War II, Arrow Cross units collaborating with the Nazis¹¹⁸ massacred the Roma. That dark history is also not subject to open public debate and accountability.

The shadow of history and the situation after 1989

The period of communism in both countries – as, indeed, in the entire Eastern Bloc – and the associated processes of industrialization, spread of education, employment and productivity, for the Roma, as well as the lower classes in general, had positive effects, generally speaking. Given the number of the Roma in Hungary, the process of combating socio-economic marginalization has progressed much more slowly. Nevertheless, in both countries, at least at the level of local conditions, the Roma have made some social advancement. Sometimes, as in Poland, this was done at the price of abandoning traditional professions or a nomadic lifestyle, combined in addition with state oppression, militia surveillance, arrests and systemic stigmatization.

The heavy reliance on employment conditions in socialist economies meant that the collapse of the system in 1989 and the introduction of market economy in both countries affected these communities in similar ways. The Roma lost their jobs en masse and became dependent on social welfare, which at the same time was being drastically reduced under the reforms. It should be remembered that this was a period of severe pauperisation for all poorer and working classes, and the conditions of the newly created fierce competition for resources resulted in the same processes of growth of far-right, racist sentiments and groupings. Despite the huge difference in

118 Stowarzyszenie Romów w Polsce. Eksterminacja Romów w okresie II wojny światowej w okupowanych krajach Europy. *Romowie.net*. <http://www.stowarzyszenie.romowie.net/Eksterminacja-Romow-w-okresie-II-wojny-swiatowej-w-okupowanych-krajach-Europy-151.html>

the numbers of the Roma in Poland and the Roma in Hungary, a similar process took place in the 1990s in both countries – there were acts of violence, beatings, anti-Gypsy killings, often led by neo-Nazi militias. In both countries, it is the far right that has particularly targeted the Roma. And with tragic consequences, leading to the mass emigration of communities from many localities. In Hungary, this process culminated in a series of killings of the Roma by neo-Nazi militias between 2006 and 2008¹¹⁹.

In Poland, one of the effects of the rise in anti-Gypsy sentiment in the 1990s, combined with deteriorating living conditions, was the mass emigration recently described by researchers at the University of Warsaw and the University of Roehampton¹²⁰, considered the largest ethnic exodus from Poland since the 1968 emigration of Polish Jews. This period is symbolized first and foremost by the famous pogrom in Mława¹²¹, during which the property of the local Roma was publicly destroyed, consequently leading to the flight of many residents and, in the long run, to the demise of this community as an important socio-cultural centre. At the same time, the pogrom in Mława received condemnation from the central authorities. A special commission was set up to investigate the incidents, and well-known public figures and Roma leaders were sent to diffuse the conflict.

Compared to Poland, Hungarian politics, especially under Fidesz, has much stronger features of structural and institutional racism where the central government has a passive or even active role in it. In the case of Hungary, local disputes and problems between Hungarians and their Roma neighbours are not resolved by the central government, but are sometimes even fuelled. The best example is the high-profile issue of segregation of children in Hungarian schools – a practice with its roots still in the communist period, involving the creation of separate classes in which less was required, less was taught, resulting in a lower number of the Roma graduating from school, or gaining second- or third-level education or entering the job market. The court case brought by parents and students from the school in Gyöngyöspata went through all instances, eventually finding its finale in Strasbourg. The European Court of Human Rights has recognized educational practices as violating fundamental

119 BBC.com. (2013, August 6). Hungarian gang jailed for racist Roma killings – BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-23586440>

120 Fiałkowska, K., Garapich, M.P., Mirga-Wójtowicz, E. (2018). *Migration Paths of Polish Roma "Between Tradition and Change – Migration Paths of Polish Roma"*. Warsaw: Centre of Migration Research. https://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Between-tradition-and-change-migration-paths-of-Polish-Roma_ost.pdf

121 Giza-Poleszczuk, A., Poleszczuk, J. (2001). Cyganie i Polacy w Mławie. Konflikt etniczny czy społeczny. In Jasinska-Kania, A. (ed.). *Trudne sąsiedztwa. Z socjologii konfliktów narodowościowych*. Warsaw: Scholar.

rights¹²², prompting the European Commission to issue a series of communications ordering the Hungarian state to desegregate and implement anti-discrimination laws in the field of education¹²³.

The reaction of Fidesz, particularly Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, was – in the context of other disputes with the European Commission – predictable. Sharply criticizing the verdict, he went as far as using a strongly populist ploy of holding a ‘nationwide consultation’, stating in advance that 80% of Hungarians disagree with the verdict, because they are ‘decent, hard-working Hungarians’, and proclaimed the verdict itself ‘unjust’¹²⁴. The Gyöngyöspata school case continues to be cited in reports indicating systemic anti-Gypsyism culturally deep-rooted in Hungarian society. However, it is not the only one or the last one. In 2020, the media widely reported on physical violence used by teachers against Roma students¹²⁵. At the local level, not much has changed in the last decade. In 2012, in the town of Devecser in western Hungary, some 700 far-right activists took part in a demonstration followed by a physical attack on a Roma settlement. In 2022, there was a similar demonstration by neo-Nazi paramilitary groups *Mi Hazánk Mozgalom* and *Betyársereg*, which, however, was met with a more numerous counterdemonstration by the Roma themselves¹²⁶.

Hungary is thus a rather special case when it comes to the situation of the Roma. In a country with increasingly populist and authoritarian attitudes and policies, the Roma are constantly subject to attacks and hate speech in public discourse. At the same time, this generates strong reactions from civil society and human rights organizations, but it is nevertheless a very uneven fight, which the Roma are unfortunately losing¹²⁷. At the same time, however, it is a community that is so large and diverse

122 *Horváth and Kiss v. Hungary*, 11146/11 (European Court of Human Rights, 29 April 2013)

123 Fenyő, K., Kaufmann, B. (2020, May 13). Hungarian Roma feel vindicated by school segregation ruling. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-roma-segregation-ruling-idUSKBN22P1WK>

124 Kokot, M. (2020, May 13). Węgierski sąd nakazał wypłatę Romom odszkodowania za lata segregacji. Orban: “To niesprawiedliwe”. *Wyborcza.pl*. <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75399,25942174,wegierski-sad-nakazal-wyplate-romom-odszkodowania-za-lata-segregacji.html>

125 Brasso, V. (2020, May 15). Director of segregated Gyöngyöspata school must not get away with assaulting a 12-year-old Romani boy. *European Roma Rights Centre*. <http://www.errc.org/news/director-of-segregated-gyongyospata-school-must-not-get-away-with-assaulting-a-12-year-old-romani-boy>

126 Rorke, B. (2020, September 20). Hungary: Roma counter-demonstrators outnumber neo-Nazis in Nyíregyháza. *European Roma Rights Centre*. <http://www.errc.org/news/hungary-roma-counter-demonstrators-outnumber-neo-nazis-in-nyiregyhaza>

127 The case of Viktória Mohácsi, a Roma-Hungarian MEP from 2004 to 2009, is unprecedented. Active in documenting neo-Nazi hate crimes against the Roma between 2006 and 2008, she and her family became targets of constant threats and hate speech. Her Movement for Desegregation Foundation exposed the racist negligence and incompetence of Hungarian law enforcement authorities, which allowed the killers to hide at large for longer periods of time and kill and maim the Roma. In 2008, she arrived in Tatárszentgyörgy after

that within the Roma themselves there is no shortage of activists supporting Fidesz, the best example being Lívía Járóka¹²⁸, a Roma woman, vice president of the European Parliament in the last term.

And in Poland?

Against the backdrop of Hungary's fascist militias and the authorities supporting them, modern Poland may seem like an oasis of peace and tolerance for the Polish Roma. Indeed, Polish far-right organizations focus their hate speech more on refugees, Muslims or the LGBTQ+ community than on the Roma. However, there is no shortage of incidents at the grassroots level usually originating in neighbourhood disputes (e.g., Andrychów¹²⁹), in local politics and informal attempts to remove the Roma from a given area (the case of Limanowa¹³⁰) or in occasional disputes of a cultural nature when non-Roma are intolerant of the consumption of food and alcohol on graves during the All Souls' Day¹³¹. However, such conflict situations are resolved by regional representatives of state authorities, through Plenipotentiaries of Governors for National and Ethnic Minorities, who in each province are responsible for state policy towards minorities and are in constant contact with Roma organizations. A review of recent proclamations, manifestos and issues publicized by far-right organizations – including the National Radical Camp (ONR) and the Confederation – indicates selective treatment of minorities and a failure to pay attention to the Roma.

We identify a number of reasons for this. First of all, unlike Hungary, Poland has been running and implementing a government programme for the Roma community for almost 20 years, and under the Law on Minorities some Roma leaders have direct access to state authorities through, for example, the aforementioned plenipotentiaries

the murder of Robi Csorby and his five-year-old son Robiki and confronted the police, who claimed the victims had died as a result of an accident. After the incident, Viktória began receiving threatening e-mails in which she was called a 'smelly, nasty Gypsy' and a 'filthy animal' that 'will soon die with the rest of your race'. In 2009, she requested police protection because of the content of the threats. In 2012, Viktória Mohácsi received the annual Human Rights First award in New York for her work and soon applied for political asylum in Canada, which she was granted in 2018.

128 Euobserver.eu (2019, May 29). Three Roma MEPs elected to European Parliament. <https://euobserver.com/tickers/145043>

129 Onet.pl (2014, June 19). Konflikt w Andrychowie. Policja: to działanie grup rówieśniczych. <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/krakow/konflikt-w-andrychowie-policja-to-dzialanie-grup-rowiesniczych/7b891f8>

130 Fatek, A., Dybała, B., Chwał, P. (2016, January 12). Czchów, Limanowa: Romowie niemile widziani. *Bochnia NaszeMiasto*. <https://bochnia.naszemiasto.pl/czchow-limanowa-romowie-niemile-widziani/ar/c1-3621566>

131 Wałbrzych24.com (2022, November 3). Biesiadowali na grobie. Romowie zaatakowali policjanta. <https://www.walbrzych24.com/artykul/38313/k/1/biesiadowali-na-grobie-romowie-zaatakowali-policjanta>

and as part of the work of the government's Commission for Ethnic and National Minorities. Despite some drawbacks, this mechanism appears to be quite effective in defusing potential neighbourly tensions that may take the form of ethnic conflict. The number of Roma in Poland is small enough that most branched families are interrelated, and the patriarchal nature of decision-making structures also means that conflicts are resolved informally and often very quickly. Leaders are quite adept at publicizing any instances of discursive attacks on the Roma by Polish politicians.

Second, the xenophobic and racist populism of Poland's ruling party focuses on an imaginary stranger who threatens the 'healthy fabric of the nation', whether by religion or origin from a 'foreign civilization'. Due to the small number of the Roma in Poland, with Poland slowly turning from a country of emigration into a country of immigration, the local Roma are becoming more of 'fellow countrymen' on a comparative basis. The example of the aforementioned Mława illustrates this process well. Despite the depopulation and decline of this community, several dozen people of Roma origin still live in Mława. In the past decade, it has become a town where many Chinese working in nearby factories and Ukrainians have settled. In such a world of local Poland, who is a 'stranger' and who is a 'fellow countryman' is quite fluid, and in the rapidly changing urban space, the former 'stranger' Rom is a neighbour with whom one has much in common.

The potential is always there

But, if history teaches us anything, it's that in moments of crisis, perturbations at the peaks of power, generational fractures or rapid economic and social change, societies look for a scapegoat. The Roma in Poland are one of the groups affected by the greatest social aversion¹³², although statistics also show that the average Pole has not met a Rom in his life. Nonetheless, playing the 'Roma card' can be quite an attractive political weapon, even if the Roma are in such a case only the means of attacking others, and not the object of the attack itself. An example are the fairly frequent attacks by the right-wing press on the government's program for the Roma community. It has been slammed for allegedly generating corruption and being fundamentally

132 Social distance and reluctance towards the Roma in Poland have remained high for years. In the 2014–2019 CBOS survey, the level of reluctance is as follows: 2014 – 55%, 2015 – 58%, 2016 – 67%, 2017 – 50%, 2018 – 59%, 2019 – 57%. CBOS (2019). Stosunek do innych narodów (raport z badań). https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K_017_19.PDF

dishonest, despite having been positively evaluated many times. The real target, however, is the opposition party – the Civic Platform, not the Roma themselves. The attacks use negative clichés ('Cygański biznes Kopacz i Tuska' – 'Kopacz and Tuska's Gypsy business'), but serve in principle to discredit political opponents¹³³. One should also not forget about extreme, neo-Nazi groups, whose actions in the public forum usually serve as a kind of barometer of socio-political acquiescence to hate speech against the Roma. In Hungary, as mentioned, consent to that is huge and anti-Gypsyism¹³⁴ is (in addition to anti-Semitism and xenophobia) the main fuel of these movements. In Poland, people are much less inclined to allow that, which does not mean that neo-Nazi groups refrain from engaging in such activities, especially in the transnational sphere¹³⁵.

And sustaining and normalizing similar discourse, unfortunately, means that in a critical situation it can be used in a more violent way for ad hoc populist gains. The Roma have been victims of such a situation many times in history and are extremely sensitive to early signs of hate speech and discrimination. Their experience of pre-pogrom tensions and ability to identify hate speech is invaluable here – it indicates when the majority community crosses the boundaries beyond which there is exclusion, dehumanization and, consequently, violence.

In this context, Law and Justice's populist rhetoric, although lacking direct references to the Roma, may consequently turn against them. The nationalist discourse constantly normalized by schools, the state media and the Church, in which a Pole is exclusively a heterosexual Catholic with white skin colour, has a strong exclusionary effect. As many Roma organizations point out, education, or the sphere of local memory, excludes the Roma – they are missing from the local memory of Polish towns

133 Wierzchołowski, G. (2017, February 15). Cygański biznes Kopacz i Tuska. Dziesiątki milionów wyrzucone w błoto. *Niezależna.pl*. <https://niezalezna.pl/93941-cyganski-biznes-kopacz-i-tuska-dziesiatki-milionow-wyrzucone-w-bloto>

134 'Anti-Gypsyism is a deep-rooted, historically stable and multidimensional specific type of racism against the Roma, Sinti, Travellers and those who are referred to as Gypsies. Associated with anti-Gypsyism are key concepts associated with the Roma, such as orientalism, nomadism, the notion of rootlessness and backwardness. Anti-Gypsyism is a theory based on stereotypes that "unifies and essentialises the way a group is perceived and described". This view is homogenizing, meaning that all members of a group are seen as the same and behaving in a certain way, and are usually attributed deviant, negative traits, and less often positive ones. Due to such attribution of 'Gypsy' characteristics to a group or people, they are considered to be among the people who are treated as "abnormal", "alien", those who cannot adapt and fit into the dominant mainstream of society.' Mirga-Wójtowicz, E., Fiałkowska, K. (2022, 24 May). "Be careful out there, in that Gypsy district" – anti-gypsyism in a war situation. Warsaw: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.

135 Kokot, M., Gawlik, P. (2013, August 28). Z maczetami szli na osiedle Romów: demonstracje nacjonalistów w Czechach. Co tam robili Polacy? *Wyborcza.pl*. <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75399,14491118,z-maczetami-szli-na-osiedle-romow-demonstracje-nacjonalistow.html>

and villages¹³⁶, and they themselves do not feel as full-fledged Polish citizens when looking from the perspective of some cultural policies. Like other minorities, the Roma know well that an attack on one minority is an attack on all minorities, hence the strong organizational and personal ties between Roma organizations and the organisations of other national and ethnic minorities.

Anti-Gypsyism in a new form?

Another potentially destabilizing element is added to this complex picture of both countries by the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the resulting refugee crisis. According to research and to numerous reports by refugee protection organizations¹³⁷, a kind of schizophrenic narrative about refugees and the assistance provided to them can be observed in Poland, consisting in the different treatment by the authorities of the humanitarian crisis on Poland's eastern borders.

Since August 2021, at the border with Belarus, there is talk not about a humanitarian crisis but about potential enemies, who are not people, but an orchestrated element of the so-called 'hybrid war' waged by Lukashenko. This results in state services legitimizing aggression and violating international law, refusing to accept asylum applications, failing to provide assistance to refugees and unlawful pushbacks. As evidenced by activists and human rights organizations¹³⁸, which seek to support refugees in the Polish-Belarusian border region, their assistance is criminalized.

The aid provided at the Polish-Ukrainian border and the narrative around it is quite different. In this context, we are witnessing a decisive mass mobilization of Polish society and a moving scale of generosity, solidarity and assistance. The Polish government skilfully and consistently manipulates these two narratives, justifying its policies, in a populist manner, with concern for the 'welfare of the Polish nation' and the security of the people. However, the mobilization observed since the beginning of the war, in addition to many virtuous attitudes, highlighted manifestations of racism, whether

136 Garapich, M.P., Mirga-Wójtowicz, E., Szewczyk, M. (2021). Report 'Krakowscy Romowie – przeszłość, teraźniejszość, przyszłość'. Warsaw: Observatory of Multiculturalism and Migration. https://owim.uek.krakow.pl/wp-content/uploads/user-files/reports/Raport_OWIM_Krakowscy_Romowie_LAST.pdf?_t=1645047825

137 E.g. Fundacja dla Wolności and Researchers at the Border, <https://www.bbng.org/>.

138 E.g. Fundacja dla Wolności and Researchers at the Border, <https://www.bbng.org/>.

against the Roma or black students also fleeing the war¹³⁹. This is because in the flood of information it escapes the public's attention that Ukraine is an ethnically and culturally diverse country, and not all of its citizens are ethnic Ukrainians. Among them are the Roma, and how the Polish society¹⁴⁰, but also especially the Hungarian and Czech society¹⁴¹, have reacted to them is an example that stereotypes and prejudices about them are still alive and well. Despite guaranteed human rights, despite their Ukrainian citizenship and the fact that they are war refugees like other Ukrainians, they are denied rights and access to assistance on an equal basis¹⁴². Undoubtedly, there is a lot of potential here to be used by populists having a media machine at their disposal. Among Polish far-right circles, the narrative critical of refugees and the cost of aid in particular is quite strong, and it is not hard to imagine that this resentment could turn against the Ukrainian Roma, whose presence is conspicuous and against whom racism is more socially acceptable. Currently, the situation in Poland does not give reason for sudden intervention, nevertheless experience and history show us that the situation can change rapidly.

In 1993, Vaclav Havel said that the treatment of the Roma was a 'litmus test' of the condition of democracy and the state of civil society. If what we have seen in terms of the treatment of the Roma in recent years, especially in Hungary, according to Havel, is the measure of our democracy, then it urgently needs healing.

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- 139 Rzeczpospolita (2022, March 2). Uchodźcy z Ukrainy w Przemyślu. Incydenty, policja i dezinformacja. <https://www.rp.pl/prawo-dla-ciebie/art35788601-uchodzcy-z-ukrainy-w-przemyslu-incydenty-policja-i-dezinformacja>;
- 140 Mirga-Wójtowicz, E., Fiałkowska, K. (2022, 24 May). "Be careful out there, in that Gypsy district" – anti-gypsyism in a war situation. Warsaw: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung. Mirga-Wójtowicz, E., Talewicz, J., Kołaczek, M. (2022). *Human rights, needs and discrimination – The situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine in Poland. Report on research and intervention activities*. Heidelberg: Central Council of German Sinti and Roma. <https://zentralrat.sintiundroma.de/en/publication-about-the-situation-of-roma-refugees-from-ukraine-in-poland/>
- 141 Ellena, S., Makszimov, V. (2022, April 14). Faced with discrimination, Ukrainian Roma refugees are going home. *Euractiv.eu*. Palata, L. (2022, May 23). Pułapka dla ukraińskich Romów. *ResPublica Nova*. Faludy, A. (2022, December 2022). Ukraine's Roma refugees housed in cold, cramped hostels and denied schooling. *Open Democracy*.
- 142 Sławiński, A. (2022, March 28). Są tu Romowie, Nigeryjczycy, Arabowie. „Uchodźca z Ukrainy to nie tylko biała matka z dzieckiem”. *Wyborcza.pl*. Pawlicka, A. (2022, March 18). Romowie uciekający przed wojną trafiają do najniższego kręgu uchodźczego piekła. *Newsweek Polska*. Pawlicka, A. (2022, March 13). Pospolite ruszenie ludzi dobrej woli nie wystarczy. Gdzie jest rząd? *Newsweek Polska*. Pawlicka, A. (2022, May 13). Pojawienie się uchodźców to koniec jednolitej, katolickiej Polski. *Newsweek Polska*. Smoleński, P. (2022, March 29). Wolontariusze odganiają ukraińskich Romów. „Bo będą jedzeniem i ubraniami handlować jak patelniami”. *Wyborcza.pl*.

[INTERVIEW]

HUNGARY IS OUR HOME

We have nowhere to move to

Joanna Łopat talks with Anna Daróczy

I was surprised by the information I found about Roma in Hungary. It seems that the situation is terrible. Is it the truth or an exaggerated image of reality created by the media?

I don't know what you've read, but if you're talking about a terrible situation, the information could have been true. Because we're talking about a community that has been discriminated against for hundreds of years. We've always been treated badly. Ironically, there was a breakthrough for a short time during the communist period. Then, everybody had a job (that's how it was in that system). But after the democratic breakthrough, Roma were the first to be laid off. Only at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century the situation started to change for the better again – but yet another breakdown came with Viktor Orbán's government.

Between 2008 and 2009, the Roma community in Hungary experienced a series of attacks. Six people, including a child, lost their lives. Although the murderers were convicted, I found a report which shows that Hungarian Roma still aren't adequately protected against hate crimes. What is the situation like today? Has anything changed?

I think that not much has changed. We've always known that Roma are disliked in Hungary. And at some point, this dislike became a political tool. Far-right parties started building their capital on hatred towards the Roma community. They were backed by paramilitary groups, which exacted justice and intimidated local Roma communities. Everything happened with the majority's consent, that is, the Hungarians. They believed that what we now call violating human rights was done for their safety. They believed in the narrative that Roma were bad and the Hungarians needed to protect themselves from them. That was the context of the 2008–2009 attacks.

And was there any reaction? Almost none. A few politicians gave some insignificant speeches about the situation. Nothing more. Surprising, right? All the more so because we are talking about a democratic country and a European Union member state. We have been dehumanised. Roma were spoken of as if they were animals. No one was outraged that they had met the fate of animals. Such narratives were commonplace, even in the 21st century.

Roma became a common enemy?

Locally, for sure. But not at the national level. There, nobody considered Roma as a community that was strong enough to threaten anyone in anything. Because what kind of threat uneducated, uncivilised – as they say about us – people could pose? George Soros is strong enough to be considered an enemy, but not the Roma community. Nevertheless, almost all political parties (from far-left to far-right) see Roma as a problem. With only few exceptions.

Where were you when the attacks were happening?

I was studying, and what's interesting, I was at a Catholic university. Most people from my year held very conservative views. That was also the time when the Jobbik party was founded. Many fellow students joined it. And I was one of a few Romani girls studying there. I had nobody to share my anxiety with. But I remember my fear and the fear of others. Many of us locked ourselves in our homes. I was privileged because I live in Budapest, but there was a widespread sense of lawlessness and permission for aggression against us. We all thought that if someone hurt us, no one would take care of it. The Hungarian community would disregard it.

The government sided with the majority?

Yes, this is often the case. We haven't learnt anything from the attacks. They're ignored. Nobody remembers them. In the public debate, this topic is repressed. Even by the Roma community. When the judgement was announced in 2013, only a few dozen people gathered in front of the court. And although hate crime laws have been introduced, they are actually used against minorities and not to protect them. The Roma community is not protected.

The Roma community in Hungary – how large is it?

We don't have any precise data, but 800,000 is a rough estimate. In a country of fewer than 10 million people, Roma make up about 8% of the population.

How integrated are they?

Barely. I think the 1990s was the right time to carry out the integration process. Unfortunately, it didn't work out. Anyway, I prefer to call it inclusion rather than integration.

I asked about the integration for a reason. In 2016 – at the time of the migration crisis related to the war in Syria – Victor Orbán's chief of staff, speaking about immigrants, said that integration is a difficult dream to fulfil. And he gave an example – 'We've lived with Roma for 600 years, and till this day, we were unable to integrate them.'

So what does it really look like?

I think he even said they didn't need more migrants because they already had unintegrated Roma and had to deal with them somehow.

However, when politicians speak about integration, they mean that Roma must catch up to the rest of society. After all, they are uneducated, inferior, and backwards. And such opinions are constantly repeated. The problem is nobody asks why Roma are less educated. Nobody says where these social disparities come from. It's common to think that Roma just don't want to learn. Because they're too lazy. So if they're like that, then there's nothing we can do. That's why Roma are not included in integration programmes. At the national level, this problem is neglected, while EU directives speak clearly about the problem of the Roma community in Hungary and the need for integration programmes. In Hungary, this is disregarded. The concept of 'Rom' does not exist. There are programmes related to solving the problem of social inequality without considering the specific group that Roma are. Rather, there is talk of the poor needing support without identifying a specific ethnic group.

Then, I'd like to ask about segregation. In 2016, Zoltán Balog, the Hungarian Minister of Human Resources said that segregation should be introduced in schools. Because – as he said – Hungarians don't want their children in school with Roma.

Segregation begins in the place of residence. In the 1960s, Roma living on the outskirts were relocated to city centres. However, this programme has created new

ghettos, Roma poverty districts. Hungarians from such neighbourhoods quickly started to move out, so this segregation, in a way, happened naturally.

That happened in the cities. What about towns?

In Hungary, school segregation is not allowed. But this is an official stance. So as not to lose voters, the right-wing ones, of course, it was decided that some schools would be run by the Church (using government money). It's a ploy to carry out segregation indirectly.

There are two scenarios. The first: if there are more Roma children in a town, the Church opens a school for white children, and they move there themselves. In the reversed situation, Roma children are lured to a second Church-led school (created for this purpose) by promising them free lessons and lunches. This way, the authorities can say that this is natural selection and not enforced change.

I found out that between 2004 and 2017, in one of the Hungarian towns, Roma children were separated from others, and for this, in 2020, the court awarded them compensation. Victor Orbán said at the time that the verdict was unjust.

Orbán's statement has several meanings in this context – first of all, he questioned the court's authority. Then he added that, at the time of the judgement, the victims were no longer children, so they should not have been compensated. This is why the law was amended – compensation in this type of case can't be financial. Such wronged ex-pupils may be awarded extra lessons – for example, an English course – by the court (if, of course, it finds that they were wronged).

So instead of improving the situation, the judgement actually made it worse?

You could say that. Although, I should stress that no amount of money and no compensation will give back lost years at school or make up for educational gaps. But the 'courses' proposed as compensation are not helping either.

Have you experienced segregation?

No. I grew up in Budapest, but I went to a school where I was the only Rom. In secondary school, there were four of us among about 2,000 students. At the university, there were a few of us. Some, like me, did not disclose their origins. But the fact

is that in Hungary, 4% of Roma graduate from secondary school, and only 1% from university.

It's hardly surprising when many of them still live in extreme poverty. I sometimes drive to the suburbs, where you can find Roma neighbourhoods. I always ask myself, how is it possible that people live without heating? Some houses are not even made of bricks. They're just barracks. They can only be compared to slums in India. No electricity, no water. This is happening in a European country now, in 2023.

How do you live in a country which excludes a community that has been there for many generations?

It is a difficult and very schizophrenic experience. Many people who have Romani roots hide it. Or they emphasise – yes, I am a Rom, but I am different from the others. They allow themselves to be treated as exceptions to the rule because the rule is that Roma are uneducated and inferior. And you don't have to live in a slum to feel this dislike. My six-year-old niece once asked me why didn't we leave if the Hungarians didn't want us there.

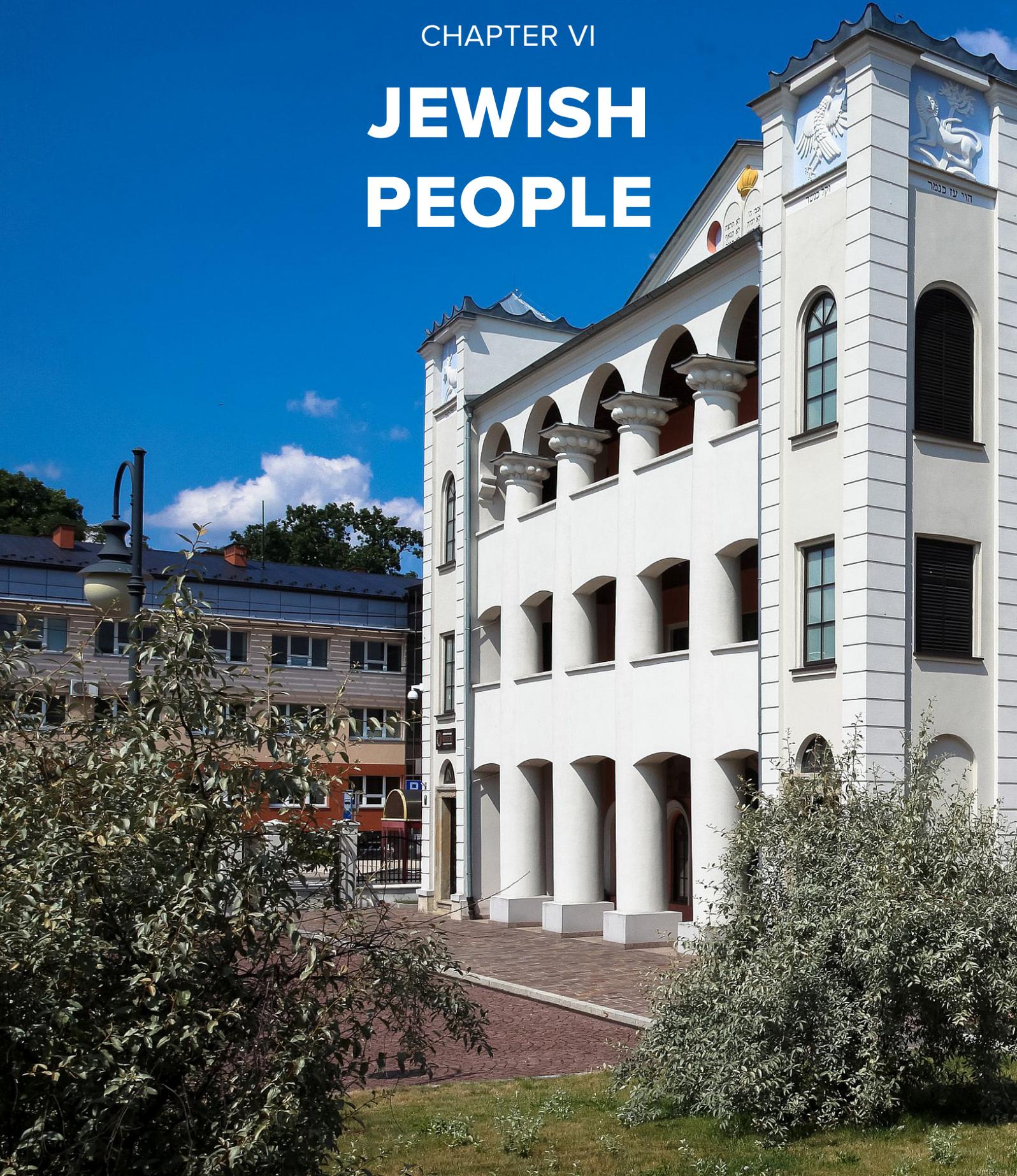
What did you tell her?

It was very painful. This little being, who was just beginning her social life, already knew that she was unwanted by this society. I can't explain it. I just told her that Hungary is our home. We have nowhere else to move to.

Anna Daróczy is a Hungarian Romani feminist activist, an expert in Roma youth issues and gender equality. She holds a BA in Social Education and an MA degree in Gender Studies from the Central European University. Anna was a Lantos fellow in the U.S. Congress in 2014, then worked at a Hungarian minority rights organization. She has been a project coordinator at the Phiren Amencia International Network since 2016 where she works to empower Roma young people in civil and political participation.

CHAPTER VI

JEWISH PEOPLE



POLITICISING ANTI-SEMITISM

Piotr Kwapisiewicz

There is a well-known saying, popular both in Poland and Hungary, that goes ‘Pole and Hungarian brothers be, good for fight and good for party’. It is humorous, but it is also a symbol of the unique relationship between the two nations, which is a rarity compared to other countries or nations. The saying refers to mutual friendship, similarities and good relations.

Famous brothers and more...?

‘I am deeply convinced that there will come a day when we have Budapest in Warsaw’¹⁴³, Jarosław Kaczyński said after poll results of the elections were announced. This statement has become a manifesto of close cooperation between the two leaders, Jarosław Kaczyński and Viktor Orbán. Both have formed strongly populist governments, often inspiring each other with their actions, such as the ‘quasi-nationalisation’ of the media, restrictions on judicial independence, and an attack on the LGBTIQ+ community. The European Union has launched Article 7 TEU procedures against both Hungary and Poland. In both countries, we can observe the phenomenon of ‘weaponised hate’, in which hatred becomes the main political tool dominating public debate, aiming to consolidate the majority society.

Moreover, since 2018, anti-Semitism has also been used (most likely with Russian involvement) as a tool of polarisation, both in Hungary and Poland¹⁴⁴. Politicians deliberately divide society into ‘us and them’, reinforcing nationalist narratives that become part of building national identity. Under these circumstances, all ‘others’ become a

143 TVN24.pl (2021, October 9). „Przyjdzie dzień, że w Warszawie będzie Budapeszt”<https://tvn24.pl/polska/przyjdzie-dzien-ze-w-warszawie-bedzie-budapeszt-ra186922-3535336>

144 Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2019). *2019 EU Elections Information Operations Analysis: Interim Briefing Paper*.

symbolic scapegoat blamed for all the failures of the countries concerned. But, let's start from the very beginning...

Figures

Speaking of anti-Semitism, we must mention the Jewish community itself, which has lived in both countries, as well as the tragedy of the Holocaust, which led to the almost complete annihilation of this community. In Poland, of about 3.5 million Jews, about 300,000 survived the war (including survivors in the USSR); in Hungary, of 760,000–780,000, about 500,000–530,000 Jews perished¹⁴⁵. As a result of post-war attacks and anti-Semitic campaigns, the Jewish community emigrated, or implemented a survival strategy that led to almost complete assimilation and acculturation. Today's data on the Jewish community is incomplete, and the statistics used by Jewish organizations are estimates. World Jewish Congress¹⁴⁶ indicates that there are currently about 10,000 Jews living in Poland, and up to 100,000 in Hungary.

Public sentiment

A recent study by Slovak NGO Globsec (2020) on conspiracy theories confirmed the prevalence of anti-Semitism in Central European countries. Various forms of anti-Semitism have been analysed, but for the purpose of this article, we will focus on conspiracy anti-Semitism, which, as the most adaptable, is very often used by populist organizations.

In a 2020 survey, 38% of Poles and 49% of Hungarians (38% in 2018) agreed with anti-Semitic statements that Jews have a lot of power and control over governments around the world¹⁴⁷, are responsible for establishing a new totalitarian order and for creating a migration crisis aimed at destroying European culture. In addition, 49% of those surveyed in Hungary believe that it was George Soros¹⁴⁸ who arranged and

145 I. Barna (2019). Hungary. In Barna, I., Felix, A. (eds.). *Modern Antisemitism in the Visegrad Countries*. Budapest: Tom Lantos Institute.

146 The numbers are a product of the census, membership in Jewish organizations and participation in Jewish holidays.

147 Hajdu, D., Klingova, K. (2020). *Voices of Central and Eastern Europe Perceptions of democracy & governance in 10 EU countries*. Bratislava: Globsec.

148 George Soros – American stock market investor of Hungarian-Jewish descent, also a philanthropist, founder

financially supported the anti-government protests in recent years¹⁴⁹. According to another survey, 47% of Polish and 35% of Hungarian respondents admitted that they would be willing to engage in or accept discrimination against Jews¹⁵⁰.

Anti-Semitism in Central European- countries has a specific form. It differs from Western European patterns in its cultural and historical specificity and in how it is rooted in the cultural and political heritage of the region¹⁵¹. This was confirmed by research conducted as part of the Combat Anti-Semitism in Central Europe (ComAnCE) project. Anti-Semitism is changing its formula here. It is a kind of tool to exclude and discredit Jews and liberal elites who favour pluralism and a multicultural society. The result is a process of politicising anti-Semitism with the use of various conspiracy theories based on prejudices and stereotypes in a given cultural code. This mechanism is adapted immediately, regardless of the country's level of democratisation¹⁵².

This type of pattern was noted during the 2019 European elections and the 2020 presidential election in Poland, among others, when the Confederation, a coalition of far-right circles, used both anti-American and anti-Semitic demands. The narrative was built around the theme of restitution of so-called 'post-Jewish property', which correlated with the U.S. Law 447¹⁵³. The nationalists have created a fear-inducing narrative, claiming that Poland will have to 'pay USD 300 million to the Jews, and the American Congress is to blame for everything'. The Confederation, in a short period of time, gained about 10% support in the polls.

Another example based on similar patterns was the 2020 presidential campaign in Poland. According to ODIHR, 'the campaign was characterized by negative rhetoric, harsh mutual accusations, and vilification of opponents'. In addition, ODIHR noted instances of intolerant rhetoric of a xenophobic, homophobic and anti-Semitic nature, particularly from the staff of the incumbent president and the state broadcaster

of the Open Society Foundation. In the Visegrád region, his image is being used as a symbolic 'Jew' who wants to dominate religious values through his liberal agenda.

149 Hajdu, D., Klingova, K. (2020).

150 Vasecka, M., Zubrova, V. (2022). *Policy Report – Countering Antisemitism in the Visegrád Countries*. Bratislava: Tom Lantos Institute.

151 Barna, I., et al (2021). *Modern antisemitism in the Visegrád countries countering distortion*. Bratislava: Tom Lantos Institute.

152 <https://www.bpi.sk/project/combat-anti-semitism-in-central-europe/>

153 The bill, known in the U.S. as the JUST Act (Justice for Uncompensated Survivors Today), is basically five items that provide guidance to the U.S. State Department. It is to include annually in the Human Rights Report (or another report) 'an estimate of the nature and scope of national laws or enacted policies regarding the identification, return or restitution of property seized during the Holocaust'.

TVP¹⁵⁴. TVP's main newscast indicated that opposition presidential candidate Rafał Trzaskowski would support Jewish demands for Holocaust restitution from Poland and could be easily manipulated by 'Jewish organizations' and 'international circles'¹⁵⁵. The Media Ethics Council assessed that 'the materials (...) violate all the principles of the Media Ethics Charter and, broadcast especially often in pre-election periods, such as in the case of the current state television, harm Poland's interests. Stimulating anti-Semitism, racism and hatred of minorities is not in the interest of a country – a member of the European Union and NATO'¹⁵⁶.

Comments on potential claims by Jewish organizations in Polish state media were illustrated with an image of George Soros. For Hungary's right-wing populists, he has become a symbol of liberal, hostile forces. The Hungarian government has produced posters and billboards with smiling Soros and the slogan 'Don't let Soros have the last laugh'. Many of these ads were subsequently defaced with anti-Semitic graffiti¹⁵⁷. Another example of the so-called 'new hatred' among the political elites, was Viktor Orbán's speech, in which he spoke sharply against the 'mixing' of races, namely against the harmfulness of the mixing of European and non-European races¹⁵⁸.

Unfortunately, these types of actions by politicians have an impact on the society. According to the University of Warsaw's Center for Research of Prejudice, 'the more negative attitudes toward the Jews and the Roma were shaped to a greater extent by an exceptionally long election campaign, which was strongly involving and appealed to basic instincts. (...) Recent studies (...), analysing reports of crimes motivated by prejudice indicate that when the level of prejudice in society increases, ordinary people are relatively more likely to commit such acts'¹⁵⁹.

154 ODIHR (2020, July 12). ODIHR Special Election Assessment Mission, Republic of Poland, Presidential Election, Second Round. Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions. https://www.osce.org/files/f/ documents/9/e/457210_0.pdf

155 The issue of restitution of Jewish property has been present in Polish politics for years, and governments of both the left and the right have not shied away from the topic.

156 Statement by the Media Ethics Council on anti-Semitic material from TVP's 'Wiadomości'. <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,26151356,rada-etyki-mediow-antysemicka-nagonka-w-wiadomosciach-tvp.html>

157 Thorpe, N. (2017, July 10). Hungary vilifies financier Soros with crude poster campaign. *BBC*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40554844>

158 Walker, S., Garamvolgi, F. (2022, July 24). Viktor Orbán sparks outrage with attack on 'race mixing' in Europe. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/24/viktor-orban-against-race-mixing-europe-hungary>

159 Flieger, E. (2020, July 20). Skutki uprzedzeń są bardzo poważne [interview with Dr. Mikołaj Winiewski]. *NGO.pl*.

New history: Victim rivalry – Ethnocentrism – Group narcissism

All kinds of reports submitted to OSCE or the European Commission indicate that Poland as well as Hungary are implementing measures to counter anti-Semitism and introduce Holocaust education. Hungary has implemented the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism¹⁶⁰. The government named ministers who were tasked with, among other things, exploring the possibility of introducing the definition into mainstream curricula. Relevant authorities of the judiciary have been asked to assess how to incorporate the definition into the training of judges and prosecutors. A special report concluded that adequate safeguards are in place to combat hate speech and hate crimes, but that additional steps can be taken to raise awareness and train legal professionals¹⁶¹. Such steps were taken, the definition was implemented in the Hungarian system, which was highly appreciated by experts working in the field of counteracting anti-Semitism.

The only V4 country that has not implemented the definition is Poland. This is puzzling, since it was Poland that participated in the entire process of its creation. Admittedly, in October 2021, a statement was posted on the Culture Ministry's website, according to which 'Poland, as a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, supported in 2016 the Alliance's adoption of a legally non-binding working definition of anti-Semitism... This implies Poland's recognition of the IHRA's legally non-binding working definition of anti-Semitism as an important and self-evident benchmark in countering this phenomenon'¹⁶². However, this remains just a statement. And the implementation of the definition would lead to a unified understanding of anti-Semitism, which would be helpful to individuals and institutions, including educational ones, in countering anti-Semitism.

Hungary has also introduced Holocaust education in schools, at the primary and secondary levels, as well as in higher education institutions and universities. Since 2000

160 It is a non-legally binding definition of anti-Semitism, with clear examples of the various forms it can take. These examples include traditional expressions of anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial and new forms relating to Israel, such as demonising the Jewish state or holding local Jewish communities responsible for its actions. The definition was the result of an initiated collaboration between the American Jewish Community, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) and Jewish communities. The definition has won approval from the European Commission as a useful initiative to counteract and combat anti-Semitism.

161 About Hungary (2019, February 19). Hungarian government to promote IHRA's working definition of anti-Semitism. <https://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/hungarian-government-to-promote-ihras-working-definition-of-anti-semitism>

162 MKiDN (2021). Oświadczenie w sprawie definicji IHRA. <https://www.gov.pl/web/kultura/oswiadczenie-w-sprawie-definicji-ihra>

and 2001, Holocaust Memorial Day has been celebrated in high schools¹⁶³. In Poland, as early as 1999, the Minister of National Education decided to include Holocaust education in the curriculum as a compulsory subject in high schools with a humanities profile (youth aged 13–19). However, when analysing educational and commemorative activities, we should keep in mind how they are actually carried out, what their mission is, and how they affect a country's citizens.

In Poland, the term 'politics of glory' has been used since 2017 to supplant 'politics of shame', and education reform since the 2017/2018 school year has focused on, among other things, strengthening historical and patriotic education¹⁶⁴. In the new core curriculum in 2021/2022, the focus is on creating a young person's identity based primarily on Catholic religion and patriotism. Holocaust education was juxtaposed with the heroism of Poles saving Jews. In other words, until 2017, students learned about a more complex picture of the world and the different aspects of Polish involvement, and after 2017 they only learn about the nobility of the Polish nation.

In addition, a chilling effect on education in Poland has been brought about by the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance. The Act was intended to curb faulty memory codes by introducing a fine of up to three years' imprisonment for anyone (including foreigners) who publicly and contrary to fact attributes 'to the Polish Nation or the Polish State responsibility or co-responsibility for crimes committed by the Third German Reich. Such punishment would also be imposed for 'blatantly diminishing the responsibility of the actual perpetrators of these crimes'. Unintentional acts would also be punished. Artistic and scientific activities were not to be subject to such liability. Thanks to international pressure, the bill in this form was not passed, but discussion of it led to the removal of equality-related activities and some modern forms of teaching about the Holocaust from schools. According to an analysis by the Center for Research on Prejudice, commissioned by the Ombudsman, the period of discussion of the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance was a time of evident heightened anti-Semitism in public debate, resulting in a polarization of Poles' beliefs about the history of Polish-Jewish relations¹⁶⁵. There was a noticeable increase in the num-

163 OSCE ODIHR (2020). *Holocaust Memorial Days: An overview of remembrance and education in the OSCE region*. Warsaw: OSCE.

164 OSCE ODIHR (2020).

165 However, Professor Michał Bilewicz of the University of Warsaw's Center for Research on Prejudice says that anti-Semitism has indeed become more visible. – We do not see significant changes in terms of attitudes among Poles. What has changed is that until the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance was amended in 2018, anti-Semitism was more covert. People did not admit to such views, and politicians did not use such language. Anti-Semitic hate speech on the Internet has also increased significantly since the amendment, he

ber of people idealising the behaviour of Poles during the occupation, and a doubling in the number of people convinced that all Poles were involved in saving Jews¹⁶⁶.

The Hungarian example was the rehabilitation of authors with nationalist, anti-Semitic and national-socialist views and their inclusion in the Hungarian literary canon, including the suggestion that the works of Cécile Tormay, József Nyiró and Albert Wass are included in the school obligatory reading list. According to experts, the actions were aimed at strengthening the sense of Hungarian nationalism. Given the way the above-mentioned authors publicly participated in anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi activities, it is unethical to put them as role models for children¹⁶⁷.

Experts also note that the curriculum in Hungary is increasingly ideologised. NAT (National Core Curriculum) focuses on Hungary's successful battles and ignores its failures. It portrays Hungarians mainly as heroes, and Miklos Horthy's authoritarian rule after World War I – as a relief to the nation. The core curriculum also does not include the term critical thinking, which has been replaced by a euphemism for 'cognition'¹⁶⁸.

The activities described above contribute to the formation of ethnocentrism among the recipients of such messages. Admittedly, ethnocentrism itself does not necessarily lead to aggression, but it does eliminate opportunities to learn about the other side¹⁶⁹. Such actions also fuel collective narcissism. It is associated with the group's high, idealised and defensive self-esteem, which can be responsible for hostile and aggressive attitudes toward foreign groups. Moreover, it results in a constant need to confirm the inflated image of one's own group in the eyes of others. In surveys conducted in Poland, 'people narcissistically identified with a group of Poles' agreed with the conspiracy stereotype of Jews, and prejudice against Jews was explained as stemming from 'a permanent sense of threat to a group of their own and by a specific fear of a group of Jews'¹⁷⁰.

comments. And he adds that some international surveys, for example a survey conducted two years ago by the ComRes institute for CNN, place Poland in the infamous forefront of anti-Semitism.

166 Biuro RPO (2018, June 13). *Analiza skutków noweli ustawy o IPN: wzmożenie antysemickie w debacie publicznej*. <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/content/raport-skutki-ustawy-o-ipn>

167 Huszár, Á. (2014). Nationalism and Hungarian Education Policy: Are the Literary Works of Cécile Tormay, József Nyiró, and Albert Wass Appropriate for the Hungarian School Curriculum? *Hungarian Cultural Studies, e-Journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association*, 7.

168 Makowka-Kwapisiewicz, A. (2022). Addressing Antisemitism through Education in the Visegrad Group Countries: A Mapping Report. Berlin: Kreuzberger Initiative gegen Antisemitismus.

169 Cała, A. (2012). *Żyd – wróg odwieczny? Antysemityzm w Polsce i jego źródła*. Warsaw: Nisza Publishing House, Jewish Historical Institute.

170 Cichowska, A., Golec de Zavala, A. (2011). Kolektywny narcyzm a sprawa polska. In Kofta, M., Bilewicz, M. (eds).

The Tom Lantos Institute study asked respondents about suffering during World War II. Those who expressed the uniqueness of their nation's suffering over others were more 'predisposed to anti-Semitism and expressed anti-Semitic views'. In this respect, the strongest relationship was observed in Hungary¹⁷¹. Conducting a narrative that constructs a nation's identity based on a belief in the uniqueness of its fate and suffering carries a high risk that this self-image will be challenged. Self-esteem that is very high but unstable – 'threatened egotism'¹⁷² – is accompanied by an increased risk of aggression when this evaluation is threatened. The correction of inflated self-assessment is replaced by a search for external factors responsible for the defeats suffered, identifying enemies and their machinations.

In addition, based on Michał Bilewicz's research, a belief in the uniqueness of suffering can accompany resentment towards more disadvantaged groups, whose testimonies can threaten social identity. Seeing one's own group as a victim helps relieve the burden of guilt towards those the group has harmed. 'Rivalry of suffering' thus serves to protect and rebuild a threatened social identity¹⁷³.

In turn, as David R. Mandel argues, reinforcing attitudes based on a narcissistic understanding of one's history leads to the rise of nationalism, which provides a selfish sense of group cohesion by emphasizing the group's shared greatness. On the other hand, it reinforces the sense of insecurity, pointing out the lurking dangers waiting for the nation. It also reinforces feelings of hatred by pointing out who is to blame for the nation's failures and the difficulties it is faced with. It nurtures a sense of humiliation, fostering the belief that one's own people do not receive the respect they deserve¹⁷⁴. So, we come to an absurd situation where the attackers are no longer attackers, but victims and fighters for their people, and high-status groups are trying to turn anti-Semitism into a mobilising cultural code¹⁷⁵. A subculture of the far-right played a major role in institutionalising Hungarian anti-Semitism. Modern anti-Semitic rhetoric

Wobec obcych. Zagrożenia psychologiczne a stosunki międzygrupowe. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

171 Vasecka, M., Zubrova, V. (2022).

172 Baumeister, R.E. (2009). Holokaust i cztery korzenie zła. In Newman, L.S., Erber, R. *Zrozumieć zagładę. Społeczna psychologia Holokaustu.* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

173 Bilewicz, M., Jaworska, M. (2012). Zagrożająca przeszłość i jej wpływ na relacje międzygrupowe. In Kofta, M., Bilewicz, M. (eds). *Wobec obcych. Zagrożenia psychologiczne a stosunki międzygrupowe.* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

174 Mandel, D.R. (2009). Inicjatorzy ludobójstwa. Hitler w ujęciu psychologii społecznej. In Newsman, L.S., Erber, R. (eds.) *Zrozumieć zagładę. Społeczna psychologia Holokaustu.* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

175 Márkus, G.G. (2008). Political Cleavages and Antisemitism in Hungary. *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények*, 18(3).

has been updated and expanded, but is still based on older canons. Traditional accusations and motives include phrases such as ‘Jewish occupation’, ‘international Jewish conspiracy’, ‘Jewish responsibility’ (for the Treaty of Trianon), ‘Judeo-Bolshevism’ and blood libel¹⁷⁶.

Anti-Semitism only affects Jews....

Unfortunately, this is the biggest myth about discrimination mechanisms. Even when crimes committed against people associated with different minorities were analysed, the intersectionality of hatred was pointed out. This means that if a person is willing to spread hatred against one group, they are also open to doing the same to others. All that is needed is a crisis. Currently, the unstable situation has been further exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, which is increasing fear. The theme of war as well as the fatigue and fear of the society have been used to increase polarisation using tools that are culturally recognisable and familiar. This has combined anti-Semitism and anti-Ukrainian sentiment to undermine the actions of Ukraine’s government, to minimise the credibility of its president because of his Jewish background, and to spread anti-Semitic conspiracy theories related to the war and the profits behind it for the Jewish community. Research on the subject has been conducted by, among others, the Polin Museum of Polish Jews¹⁷⁷ and the Jewish Czulent Association, but also by international organizations, including the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)¹⁷⁸. They showed that in the context of Russia’s attack on Ukraine, hatred affects not only Jews and Ukrainians, but spills over to other ethnic groups and LGBT+ communities.

Another glaring example of a tragedy demonstrating the intersectionality of hatred was the October 2022 terrorist attack that resulted in the murder of two people from the LGBT+ community in Bratislava by a radicalised teenager¹⁷⁹. News portal Dennik N reported that the attacker had posted a manifesto against the minority, LGBTQI+ and Jewish communities before the killings. In the manifesto, he called for ‘the total elimination of all Jews’. Media reports indicate that he was also reportedly looking for

176 Molnár, L. (2013). *Anti-Semitism in Hungary*. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

177 The research report is currently being compiled and will soon be available on the museum’s website.

178 FRA (2022, November 3). Annual overview of antisemitic incidents from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2022/antisemitism-online-far-outweighs-official-records>

179 The Jerusalem Post (2022, October 13). ‘Radicalized teenager’ killed two outside Slovakia gay bar. <https://www.jpost.com/international/article-719637>

Jewish targets to attack in Bratislava, but as he did not find them, he decided to attack the LGBTQI+ community¹⁸⁰. The perpetrator is the son of a politician from the far-right VLASTĚ (Homeland) party. After the murder, VLASTĚ leader Štefan Harabin, former president of the Slovak Supreme Court, accused his liberal opponents of collaborating with George Soros, ‘a long-time (...) spreader of hateful extremism’ against ‘patriotic’ Slovaks¹⁸¹.

The tragedy showed how the ‘politicisation of human rights’ and the treatment of sexual minority rights, women’s rights and equality as a political battlefield induces a sense of threat and fear in activists who oppose the phenomena in question, when they face intimidation, hatred or acts of aggression, and gives a green light to those who, in the name of the ‘white and pure race’, carry out such attacks.

180 Rekawek, K. (2022, December 2). The Bratislava Shooting and its Aftermath: Context and Reactions. *UIO.no*. <https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/news-and-events/right-now/2022/bratislava-shooting-and-its-aftermath.html>

181 Rekawek, K. (2022, December 2).

[INTERVIEW]

‘A BLACK HOLE IN THE POLISH SOUL’

Joanna Łopat talks with **Daria**, 40 year-old Jewish women from Warsaw

When we arranged this interview, you said you would like to remain anonymous. Because you are afraid that someone will paint swastikas on your door. Your request frightened me, because it is proof that in Poland a person of Jewish descent can be afraid. What are you afraid of?

I am a Jewish activist, and I believe that the Polish state is incapable of providing a sense of security to people like me. Of course, I am not saying that painting a swastika on the door is the only thing I am in danger of. That's not an extreme situation, but it is the first step towards it. For in Poland, there is public consent to anti-Semitism. People who have committed anti-Semitic crimes are not convicted. Anti-Semites go unpunished.

How do you define anti-Semitism?

Anti-Semitism is a prejudice. A prejudice that is dangerous, because it has a long history. And with reference to that history, I would distinguish (following Professor Bilewicz) three types of anti-Semitism. Firstly, there is traditional anti-Semitism, i.e., one which attributes ritual murder to Jews. Secondly, a contemporary, conspiracy anti-Semitism, which promotes the idea that Jews run the world. And finally, there is secondary anti-Semitism, which manifests itself through statements such as ‘the religion of the Holocaust’.

There are numerous varieties of these types of anti-Semitism, or prejudice and hatred toward Jews. But I believe that it is worth speaking with one common voice on this issue, and that is why the definition created by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) is so important. This is a definition that is supposed to help law enforcement authorities and courts when dealing with anti-Semitism as a crime and anti-Semitic hate speech. This definition is good and it's necessary. For anti-Semitism is a prejudice and a threat not only to the security of Jews, but also to public security

in general. All the more so, because in today's world, anti-Semitism is part of the political struggle.

I came across a study which concluded that 'anti-Semitism is not a serious problem in Poland today', because while there are many anti-Semitic demonstrations (burning a Jewish effigy, etc.), 'no political party openly proclaims anti-Semitic slogans'. And this, among other things, because Polish anti-Semitism, is anti-Semitism without a Jew.

Tolerating various anti-Semitic behaviours is as big a problem as anti-Semitism itself. I, for one, can't imagine a situation where in any civilised country, or in the main square in a city, a man would go out with a Jewish effigy and burn it. And that the police would not react. That such things happen with the tacit consent of the authorities. And ultimately without any legal consequences. This is very difficult. And it's a serious problem in Poland today. All the more so, because there are Jews in Poland. In the 2011 Census, 7,000 people claimed Jewish descent.

But 85% of Poles say they do not know a person of Jewish descent.

In Poland, a lot of people think that a Jew, as a rule, must look different. That they must be recognisable. But it's not the case. Look at me. I don't stand out in any way. So is 95 percent of the Jewish community in Poland. In addition, the identities are diverse. There are people who know about their identity and are active in social circles, and there are those who know and acknowledge their Jewish identity, but don't go beyond the circle of close acquaintances. There are also those who do not admit to their origin.

In recent years, this applies to me too – when I don't have to, I don't admit who I am.

Why?

Because it won't do me any good. And because I don't want to get into unnecessary discussions. I don't want disputes over the restitution of inherited property. This makes no sense, especially since the most avid use false information. Besides, in Poland, conversations about Jews are always very emotional. Someone said that Jews are 'a black hole in the Polish soul'. I would add that they are a *dybbuk*, which returns in different varieties and with different intensity.

What part do politicians play in these dybbuk 'comebacks'?

They are the ones who set the standards. And, unfortunately, most do not speak up when it comes to anti-Semitism. They are not united in building a strategy in the fight against prejudice. On top of that, they often portray Jews as those who do not want dialogue and act to the detriment of Poland. Lately, Israeli tours have been a problem. The fact that their participants have their own security guards is presented as evidence of a lack of trust in Poles. There has been criticism that Jews from Israel are talking about the history of Jews in Poland. Such arguments stir up old prejudices and move from political debate to interpersonal relations.

My impression is that there are no outright anti-Semitic statements, but it is well known that the ruling party supports far-right groups that are anti-Semitic and build their position on anti-Semitic hatred.

I disagree with you when it comes to politicians and the lack of anti-Semitic statements. Such statements appear. Far-right politicians are very active on social media. They don't need to speak from the Sejm rostrum, because they publish their anti-Semitic statements for example, on Twitter and on YouTube.

MP Grzegorz Braun supports a publishing house that is notorious for its anti-Semitic publications, and publishes his books there himself. That publishing house was under investigation by the public prosecutor's office for selling gadgets with the inscription 'We don't want Jews'.¹⁸² It was Braun, after all, who spoke of a 'Jewish trust arrangement' in reference to the alleged control of Polish politics.

Recall Hitler's birthday party organised in a forest in Silesia¹⁸³. It turned out that the leaders of the group that organised the event were affiliated with then (and current) MP Robert Winnicki.

And the deputy minister of digitisation is the former head of the far-right All-Polish Youth¹⁸⁴.

182 Still on sale by the publishing house is a T-shirt with the inscription 'We don't want Jews, homosexuals, taxes, the European Union'.

183 On 13 May 2017, Polish neo-Nazis celebrated Adolf Hitler's birthday. The structures of the association that organised the 'event' were infiltrated by journalists. The video they recorded shows people dressed in SS uniforms against a backdrop of burning swastikas.

184 All-Polish Youth – Polish nationalist, Eurosceptic and far-right youth organisation

But it's not just about far-right politicians. I remember the shocking statement of Professor Zybertowicz, an advisor to President Duda, who stated several years ago that 'Israel is fighting to maintain its monopoly on the subject of the Holocaust', used the phrase 'Holocaust religion' at the time. These are the words of a man who works closely with the president. Do you think the person uttering them is willing to build good Polish-Jewish relations?

And yes – our government supports and finances far-right organisations, such as the March of Independence Association and its leader Robert Bąkiewicz, who on the 80th anniversary of the Jedwabne Jewish pogrom demanded the exhumation of the victims and placed flowers on their monument in tribute to the Poles, who, according to him, were wrongly accused of murdering Jews.¹⁸⁵

Since you mentioned Jedwabne, I have to ask you about the role of education in building that aversion to Jews. All the more so as scandals continue to break over the education minister's ideas and subsequent textbooks in which history is distorted. In schools and in public debate in general, there is less and less room for Jedwabne and more for the Righteous. Is history being rewritten? Without the Jews?

The narrative that prevails in textbooks and in Polish schools is focused on the experiences of Poles and their suffering. Often the victims are mentioned by name, because such stories 'with a face' are more powerful. Jews, on the other hand, are some kind of crowd without identity. This makes their history alien. It is marginalised and trivialised.

For years, that Polish discourse has focused on the Righteous. And, of course, they are important, because the message that they carry is that you should help those in need. But this is not the way to talk about the Holocaust. This is a way to bypass what is important. This is talking about the Holocaust without victims. It's rewriting history. We are living in a really bad time. People affiliated with the extreme right are taking over power at various levels – police, government, NGOs. This is a creeping evil. These disturbing changes are occurring slowly but effectively.

What does this mean for the Jewish community in Poland?

185 On 10 July 1941, several hundred Jewish residents of Jedwabne were burned alive in a barn. The murder was German-inspired, but its direct executors were Poles from Jedwabne and surrounding villages.

This creeping anti-Semitism tires us out, but does not prevent us from going to synagogue. Social and religious life is there and growing. No one disputes that. That anti-Semitism is a hater's bias, but not one due to which Jews are beaten in the streets. Hopefully, this won't change.



CHAPTER VII

THE SITUATION OF WOMEN AND SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITIES IN CONTEMPORARY POLAND

RESEARCH REPORT
JANUARY 2023

Maciej Milewicz
Klaudia Rodziejczak
Miłosz Hodun

INTRODUCTION

Since 2015, when Poland's parliamentary elections were won by the Law and Justice party, one can observe growing hostile attitudes towards sexual and gender minorities, as well as an increase in activities by conservative organizations seeking to significantly restrict women's reproductive rights.

The narrative carried out by the authorities and right-wing media has many negative consequences for minority groups and other audiences – it reinforces prejudice, leads to worsening attitudes toward minorities, and intensifies social polarization.

The rights of LGBTQ+ people have become one of the main themes of Law and Justice's 2019 campaign. The use of the hateful narrative against non-heteronormative people as a tool in the political struggle had the intended effect, contributing to the repeated victory in parliamentary elections. In the same year, „LGBT-free zones” were also introduced, and so-called „homofobuses” (trucks with homophobic slogans) could be seen on the streets of major cities. In 2020, Andrzej Duda signed the Family Charter during the presidential campaign. He expressed his support for banning the promotion of „LGBT ideology” in public institutions. These actions led to growing social unrest, resulting in protests against the dehumanization of LGBTQ+ people. In 2022 Poland was declared the most homophobic country in the European Union for the third consecutive year (ILGA-Europe ranking), while the authorities continue to uphold anti-LGBT rhetoric, as seen during Jaroslaw Kaczynski's speeches to voters in the summer and fall of 2022.

As a result of prejudice and discrimination, the LGBTQ+ community faces many difficulties. These problems can manifest themselves in many areas of everyday life, such as the phenomena of inferior treatment at work, in dealing with health care, in offices and other public places, analyzed in a survey examining the situation of LGBTQ+ people in Poland for 2019–2020 (Winiewski and Swider, 2021). One of the most important problems is the experience of violence, which can manifest as microaggressions, hate speech, or physical violence. A significant portion of the LGBTQ+ community experiences bias-motivated aggression. A study by Mikolaj Winiewski and Dominika

Bulska (2020) asked respondents about their experience of violence in the past two years – the results indicated that 67.9% had encountered at least one type of violence, with 62.9% having experienced verbal violence. Discrimination against non-heteronormative people carries negative consequences for their psychological well-being, for example, increasing depressive symptoms and the presence of suicidal thoughts and reinforcing internalized homophobia (Bilewicz and Soral, 2020; Swider and Winiewski, 2017).

Reproductive rights have been curtailed for women during Law and Justice's tenure in power. The Constitutional Court's October 22, 2020 ruling made it impossible to undergo an abortion in the case of a severe and irreversible fetal defect. The decision significantly limited the possibility of legal abortion to two cases: 1) when the pregnancy threatens the life or health of the pregnant person; and 2) when there is reasonable suspicion that the pregnancy results from a criminal act. The ruling was met with clear public discontent, resulting in numerous protests in late 2020 and early 2021. Women have been forced to travel abroad or use grassroots, non-system solutions to terminate their pregnancies. In addition, since 2016, the Ministry of Health has stopped reimbursing the IVF procedure, which shifted the responsibility for subsidizing it to local governments and limited the ability of economically disadvantaged people to attempt insemination.

The latest CBOS survey on women's procreation plans indicates that 68% of women aged 18 – 45 do not plan to have offspring, while childless women who do not plan to have children number 42% (this was an increase compared to 2017 when these women numbered 22%). In addition, GUS statistics for 2022 indicate that the fewest children have been born in Poland since World War II. One may ask whether these figures are related to the change in attitudes toward pregnancy planning after the Constitutional Court ruling?

In addition to curtailing reproductive rights, women living in Poland face other difficulties resulting from discrimination and gender inequality. Such areas include gender wage discrimination, the problem of unpaid work for women, violence against women, and menstrual poverty.

Given the above observations and research findings, we believe that the situation of sexual and gender minorities and women in contemporary Poland is an important subject of scientific discussion, especially in the context of experienced discrimination and inequality, which can influence the overall well-being of these social groups.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- Assessing life satisfaction for women and LGBTQ+ people
- Assessing one's sense of security in the context of pregnancy planning and family formation in Poland
- Assessing the impact of the restriction of reproductive rights on the social situation of women in Poland
- Assessing the LGBTQ+ people's perception of the social situation of sexual and gender minorities in Poland
- Assessing one's sense of safety in the context of experiencing homophobic physical and verbal violence by LGBTQ+ individuals
- Assessing women and LGBTQ+ people's acceptance of democracy in Poland

METHODOLOGY



Quantitative CAWI survey with a random-quota sample of N=308 women and N=103 LGBTQ+ individuals.



Qualitative IDI research with representatives of women's organizations and LGBTQ+ people



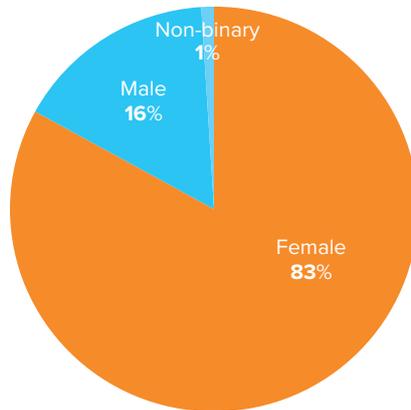
The research was conducted on January 3–15, 2023.

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

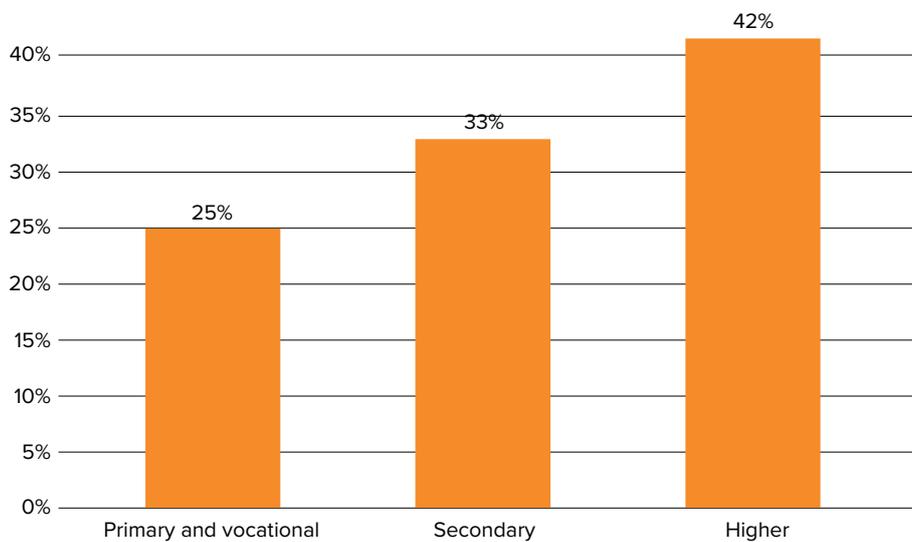
Results

Sample structure

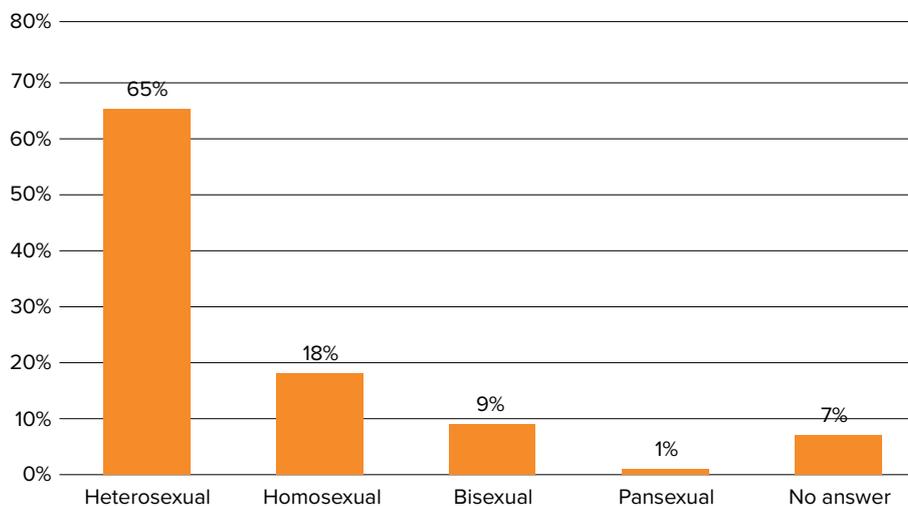
Gender of respondents (N=411)



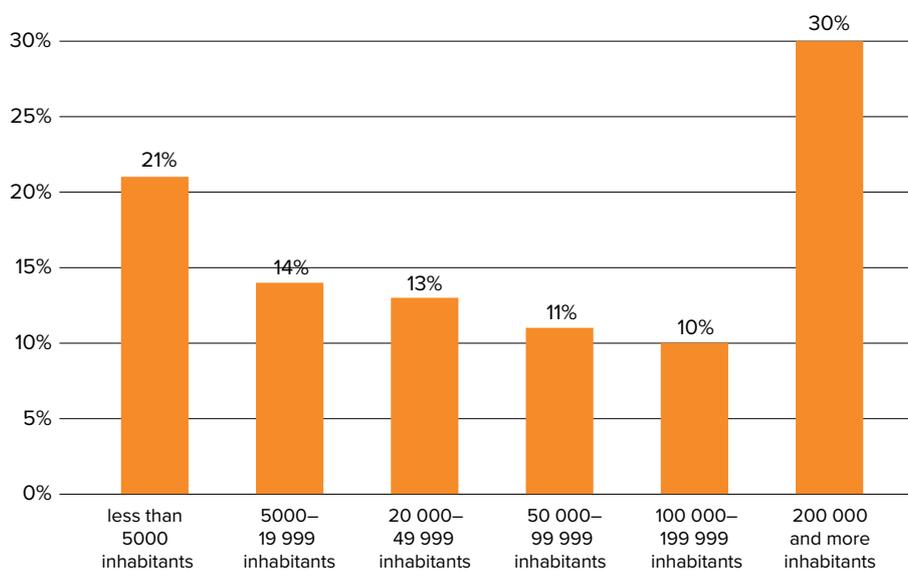
Education (N=411)



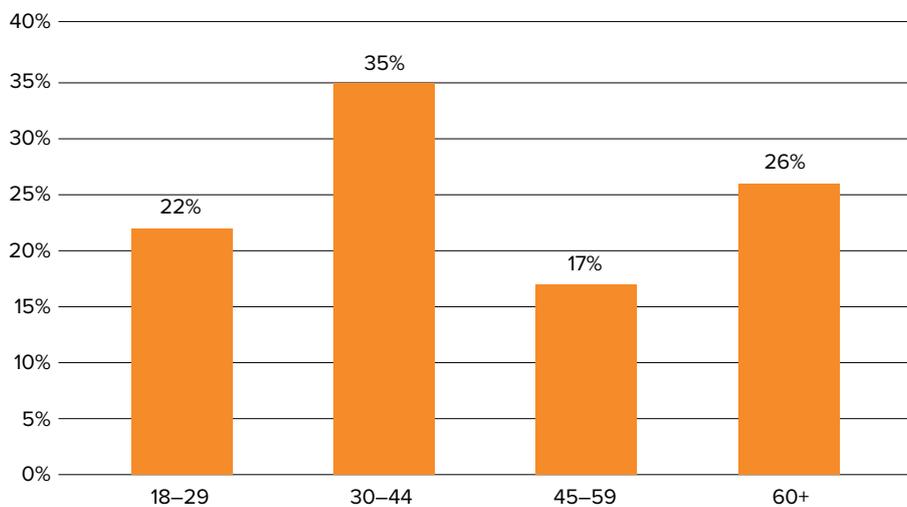
Sexual orientation (N=411)



Size of residence (N=411)

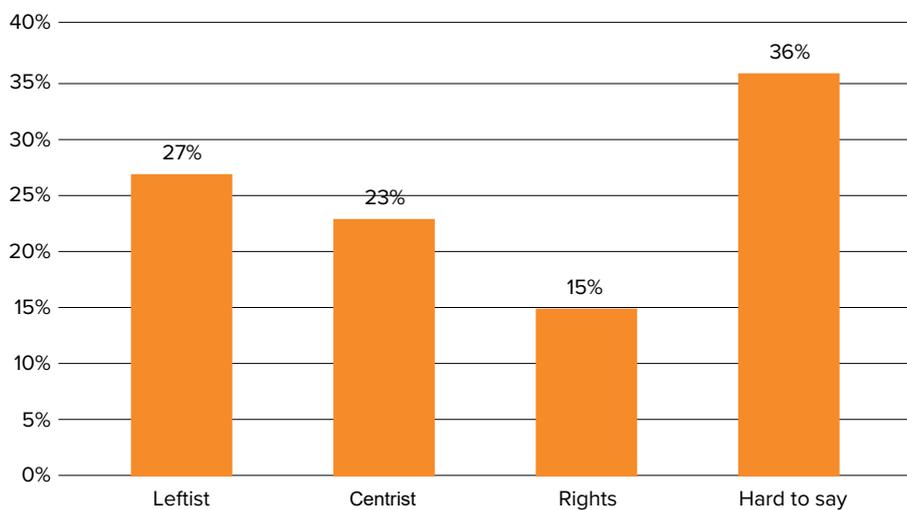


Age (N=411)

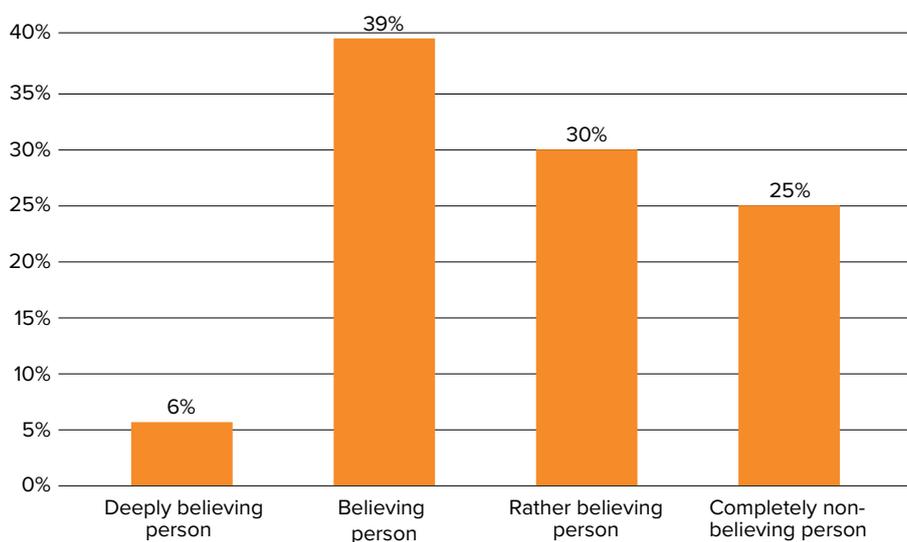


Socio-demographic characteristics

Political views (N=411)

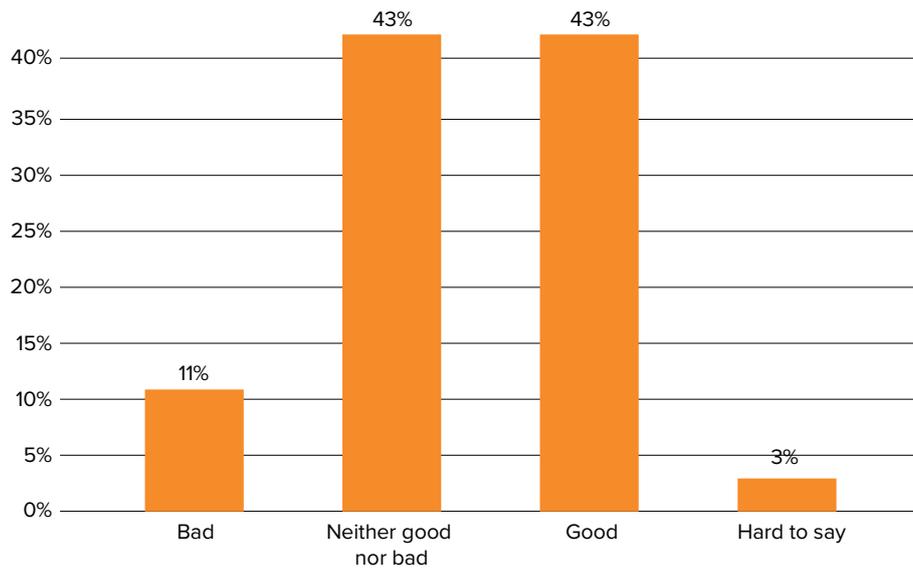


Religious practices (N=411)



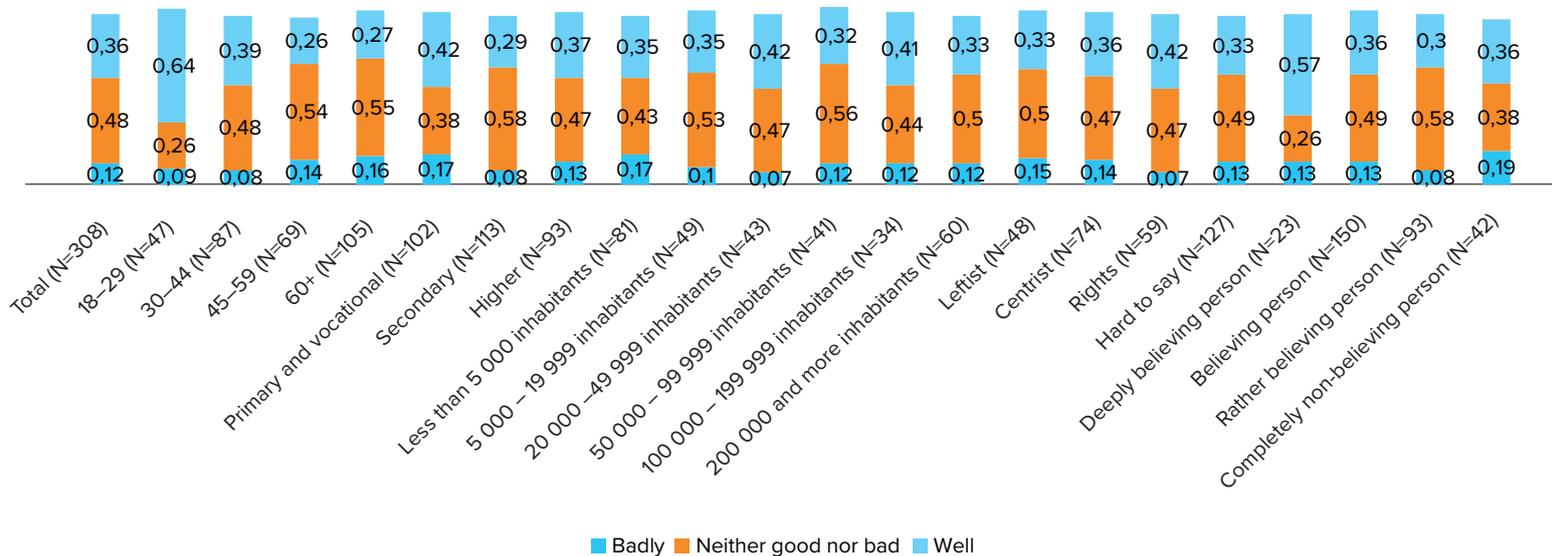
ASSESSING OWN LIVING SITUATION

1. Are you and your family currently living:



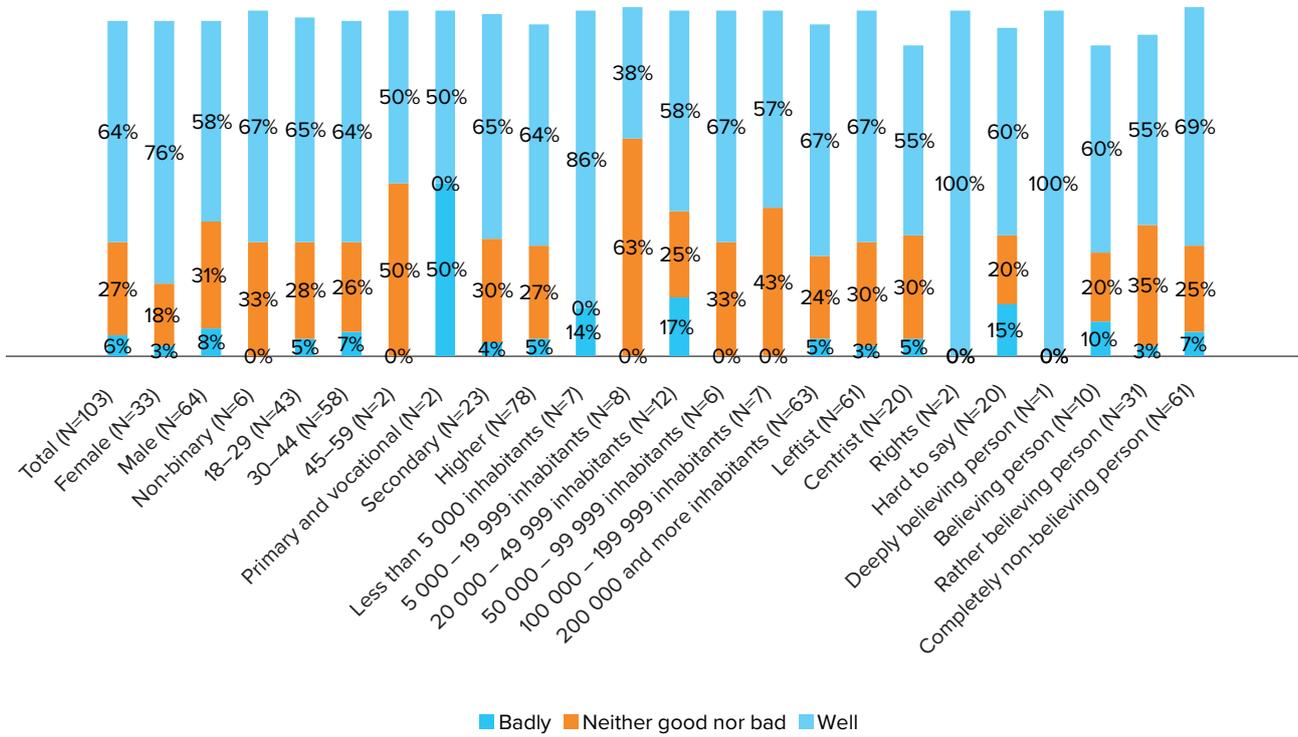
(N=811)

1a. Are you and your family currently living: (women)

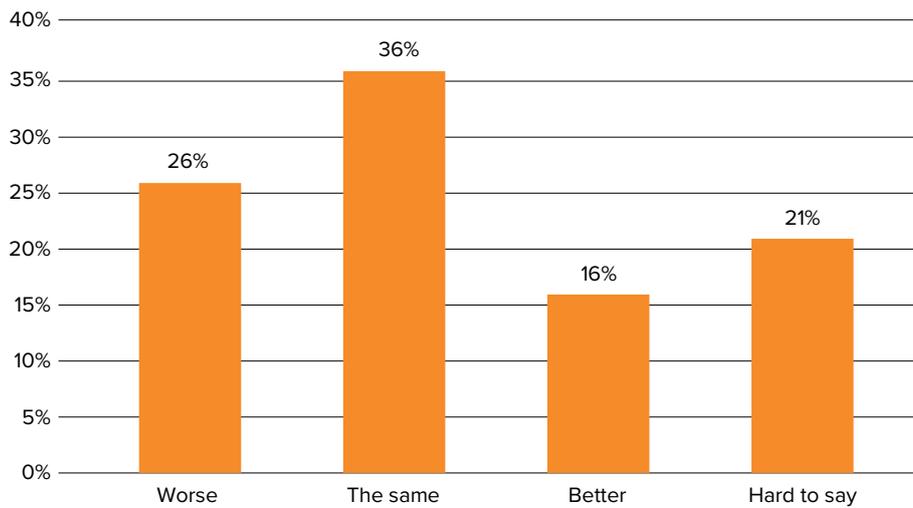


Badly Neither good nor bad Well

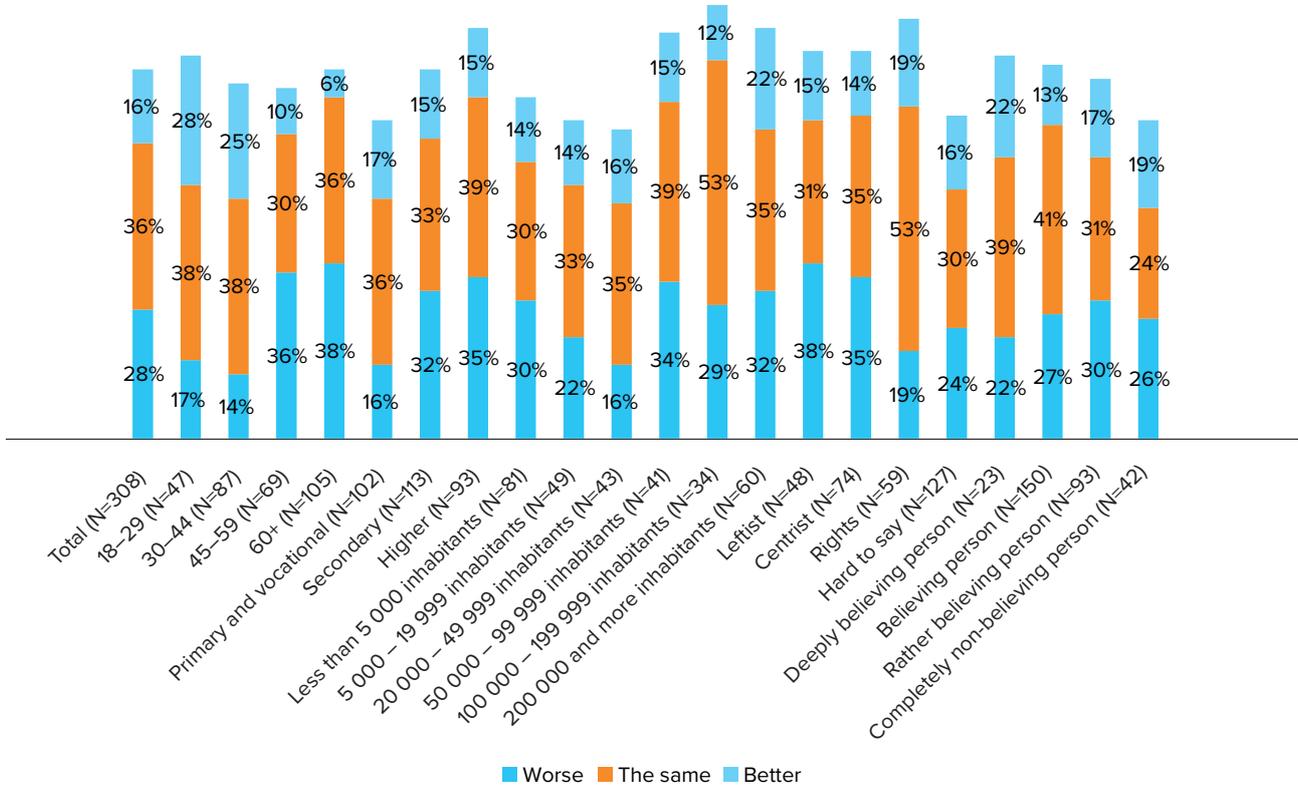
1b. Are you and your family currently living: (LGBTQ+)



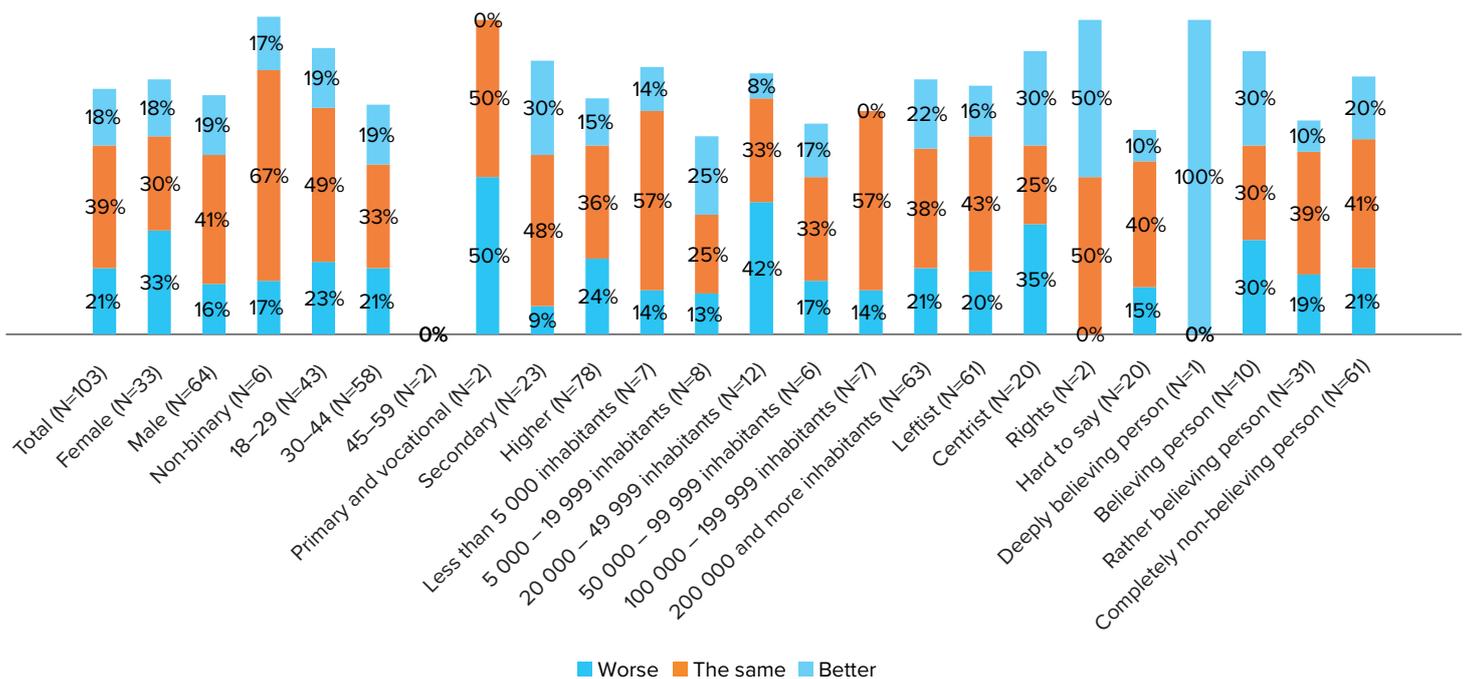
2. How do you think you and your family will live a year from now:



2a. How do you think you and your family will be doing a year from now: (women)

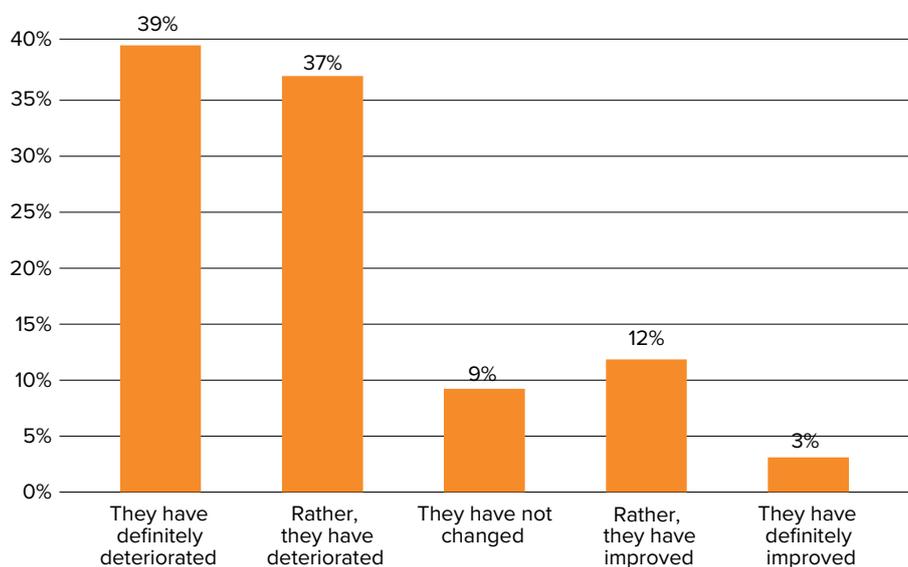


2b. How do you think you and your family will be doing a year from now: (LGBTQ+)

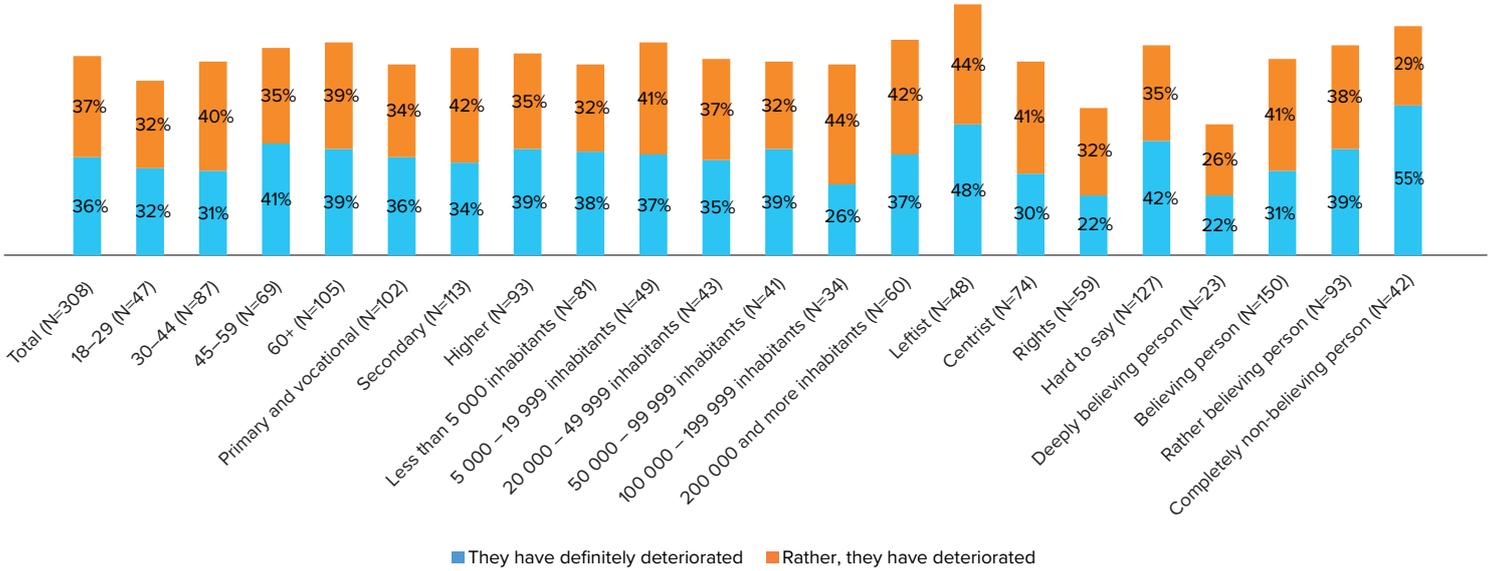


GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION IN POLAND

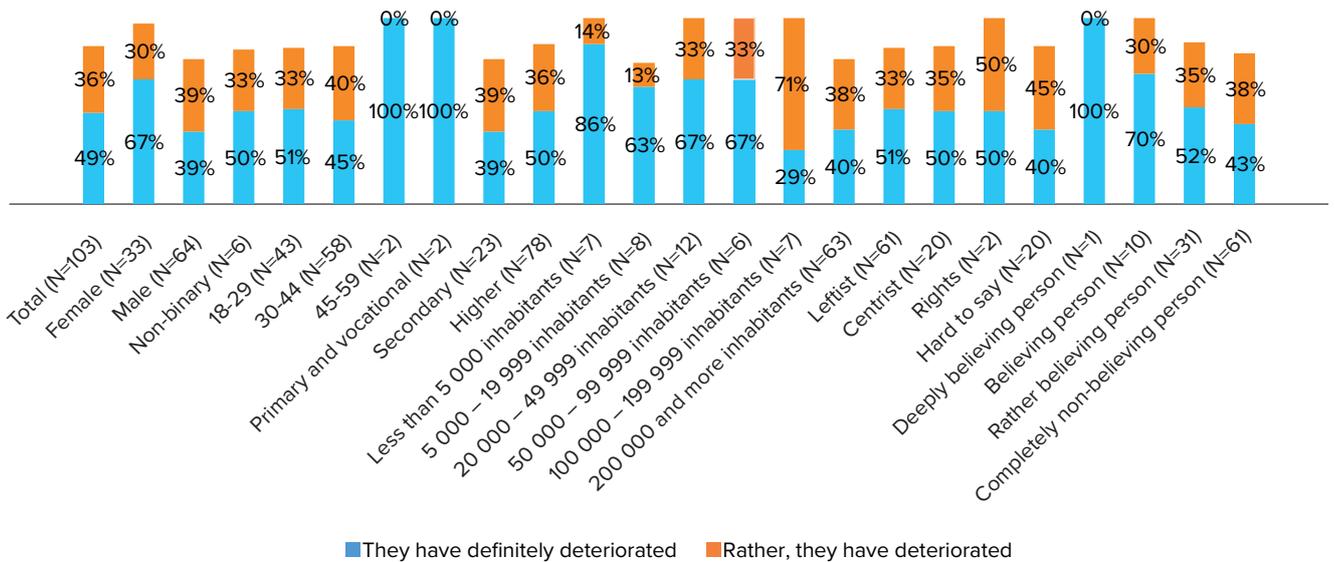
3. When you look back at the past, do you think in the last five years, the living conditions in Poland:



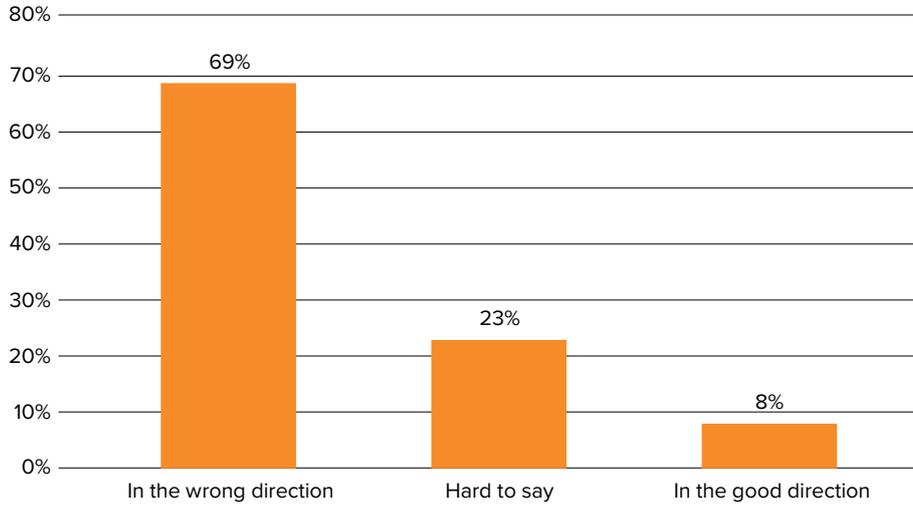
3a. When you look back at the past, do you think in the last five years, the living conditions in Poland: (woman)



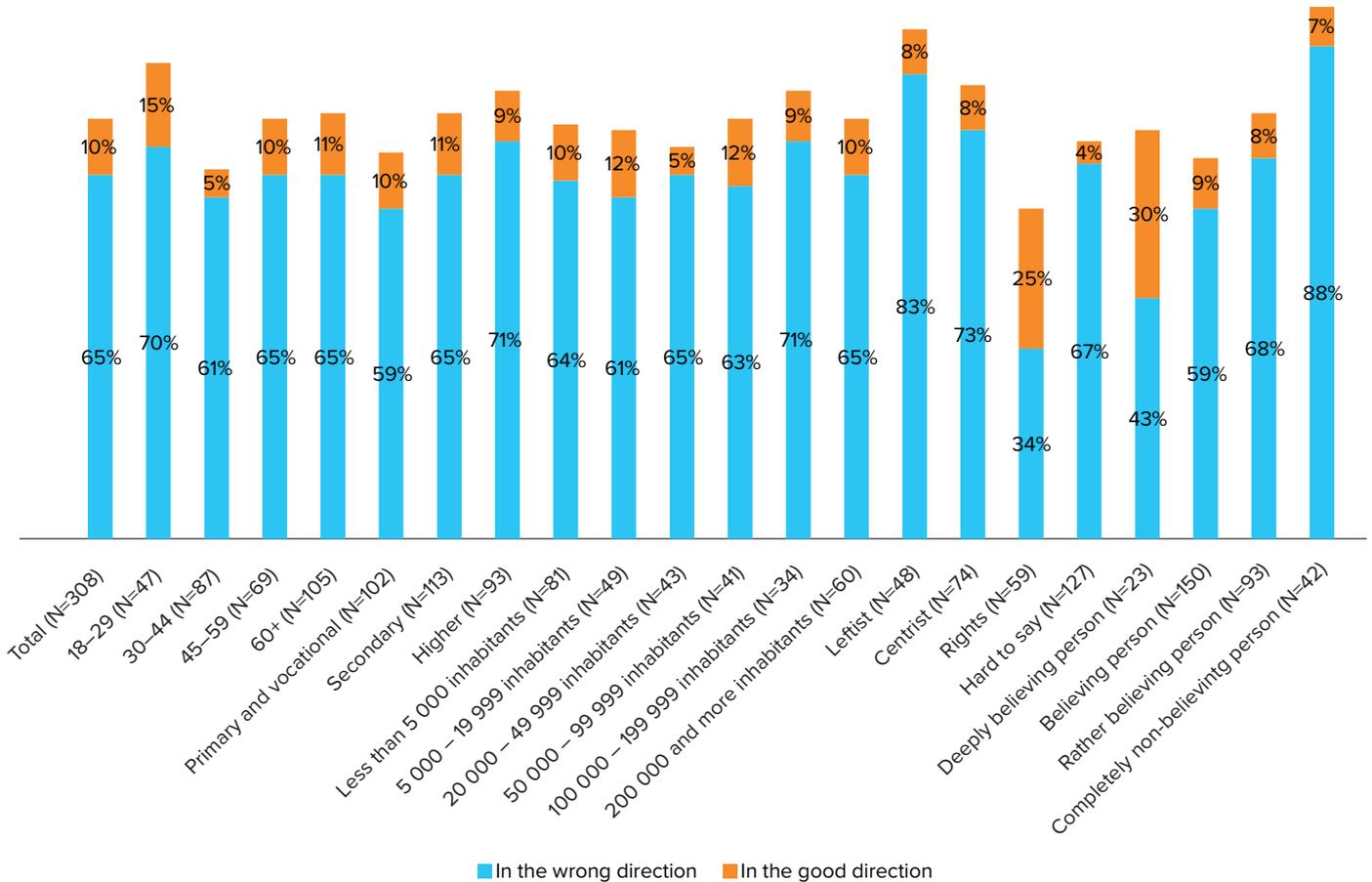
3b. When you look back at the past, do you think in the last five years, the living conditions in Poland: (LGBTQ+)



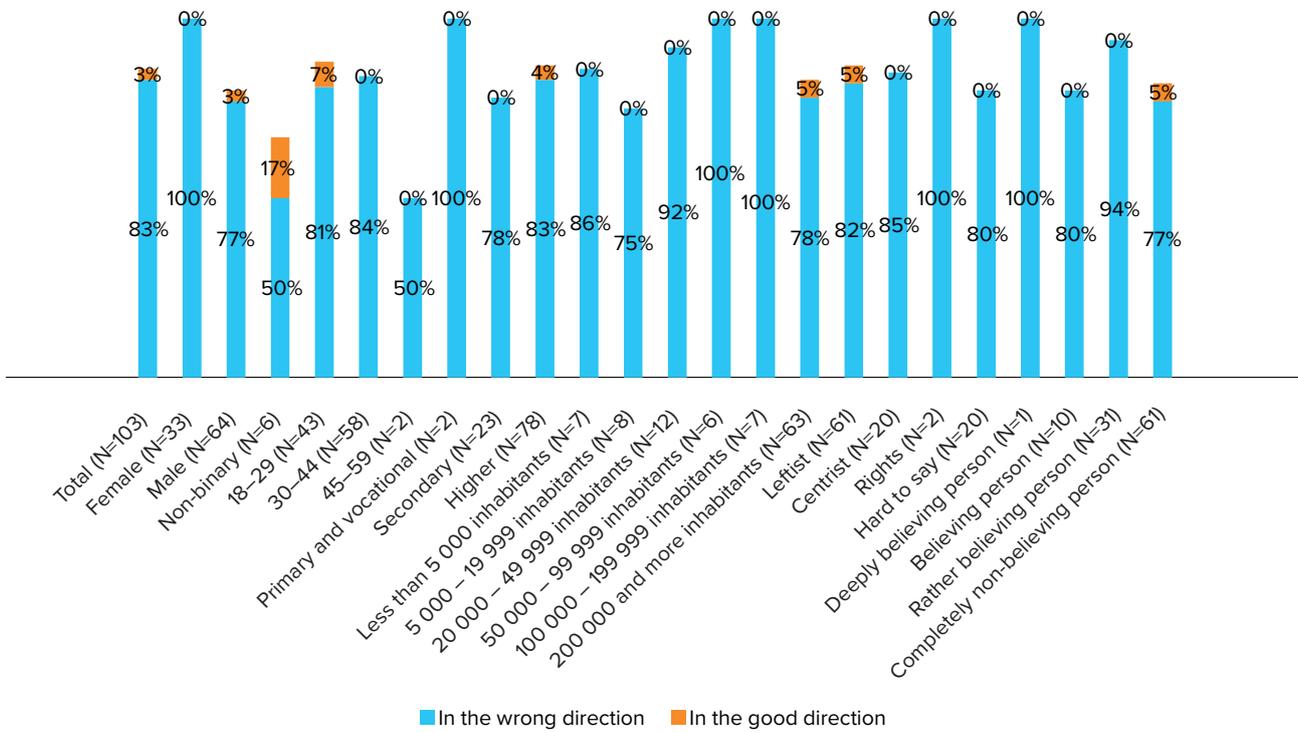
4. In general, is the situation in our country moving in the right or wrong direction?



4a. In general, is the situation in our country moving in the right or wrong direction? (Women)

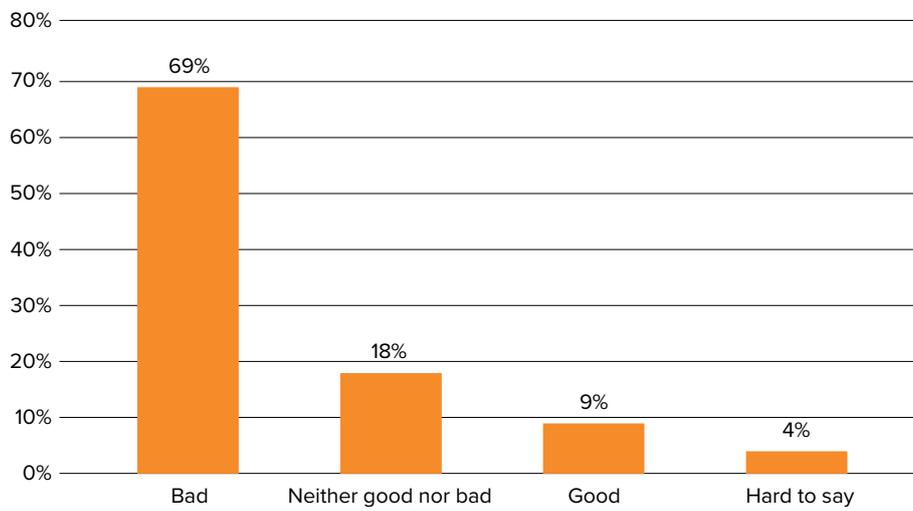


4b. In general, is the situation in our country moving in the right or wrong direction? (LGBTQ+)

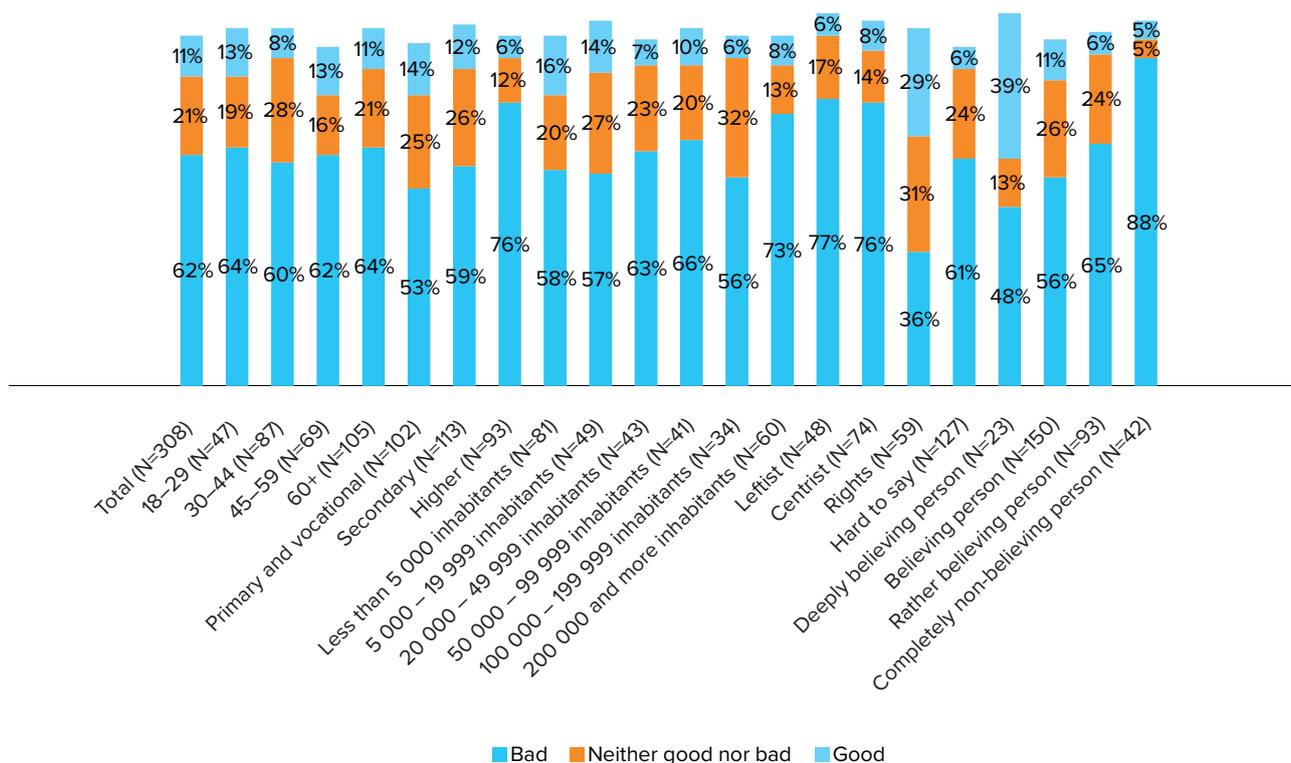


ASSESSMENT OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN POLAND

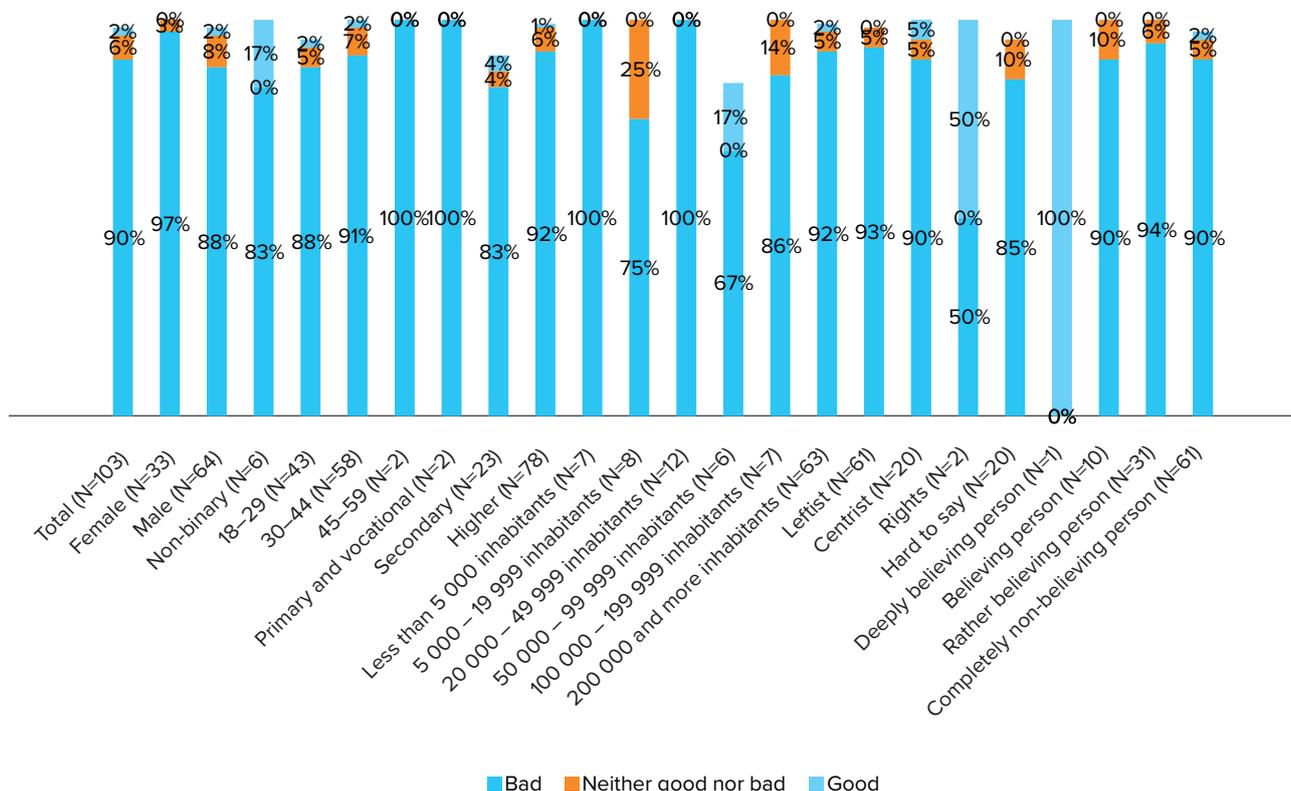
5. Overall, how do you assess the current political situation in Poland? Is it:



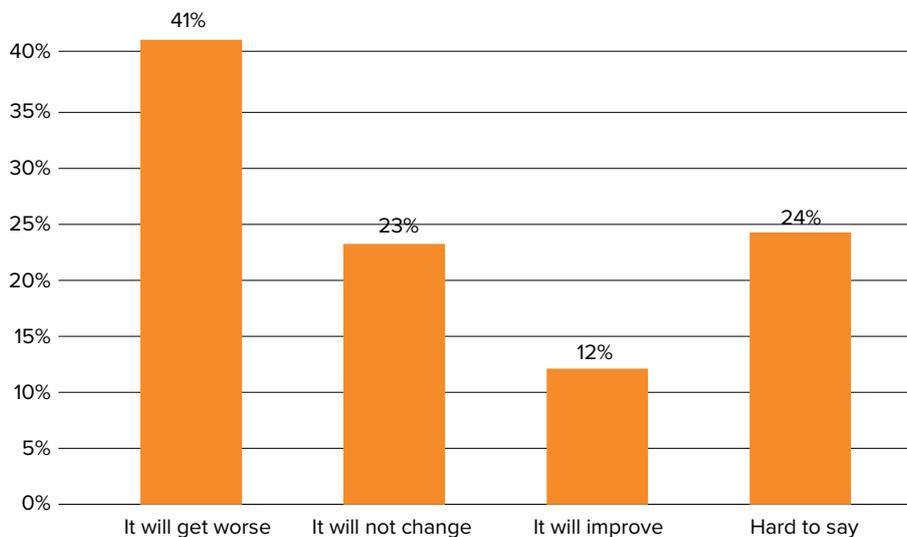
5a. Overall, how do you assess the current political situation in Poland? Is it: (women)



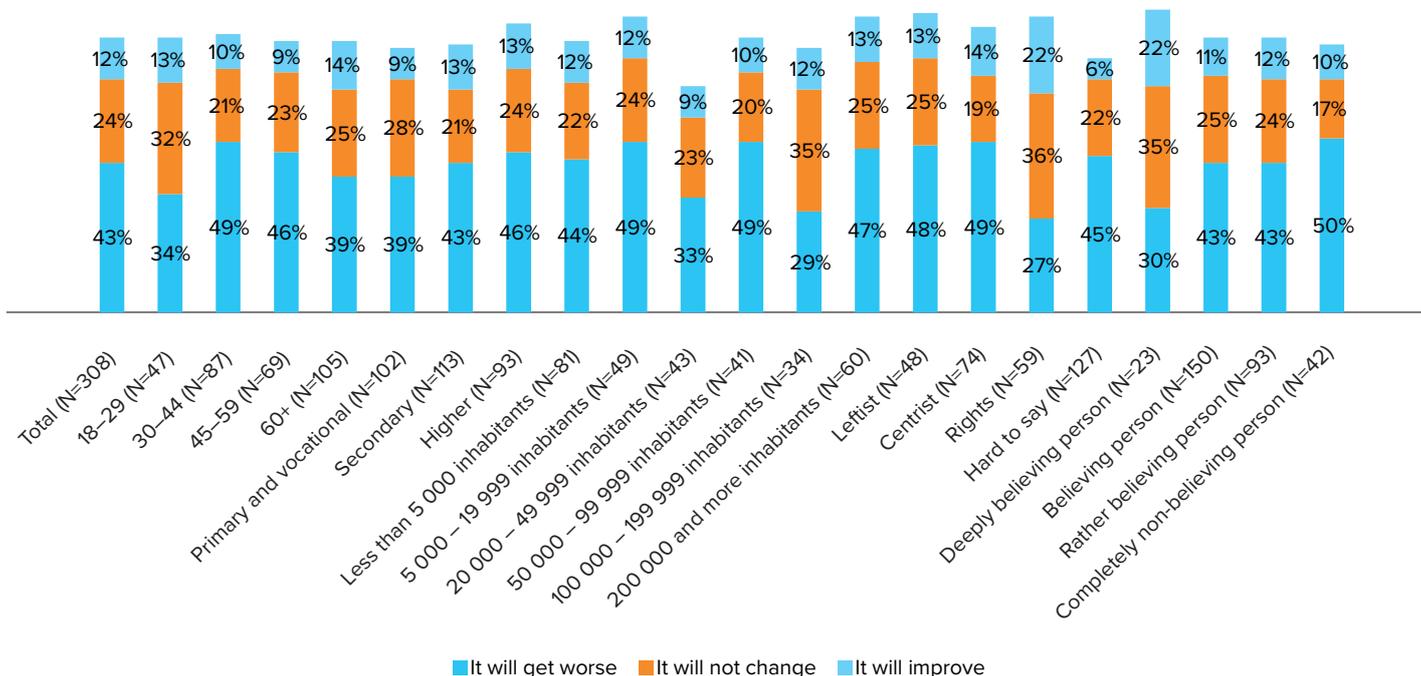
5b. Overall, how do you assess the current political situation in Poland? Is it: (LGBTQ+)



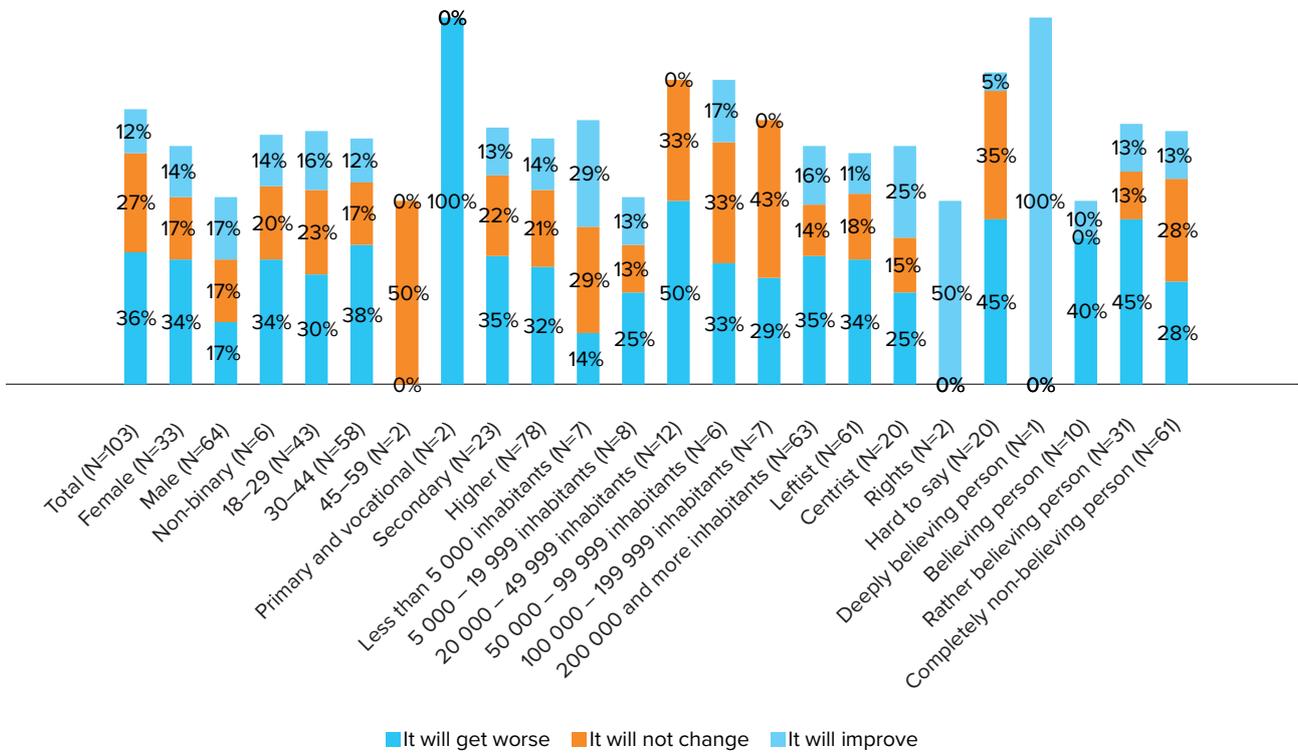
6. In your opinion, in the coming year, will the political situation in Poland:



6a. In your opinion, in the coming year, will the political situation in Poland: (women)

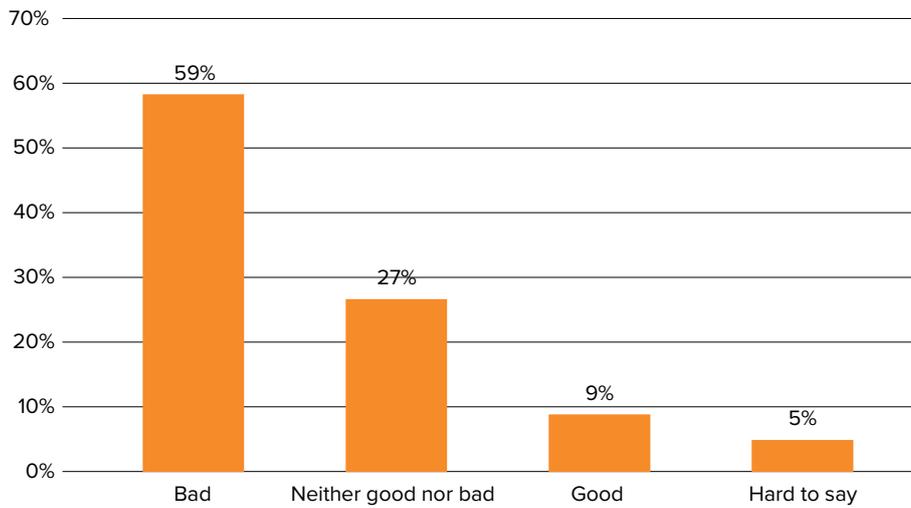


6b. In your opinion, in the coming year, will the political situation in Poland: (LGBTQ+)

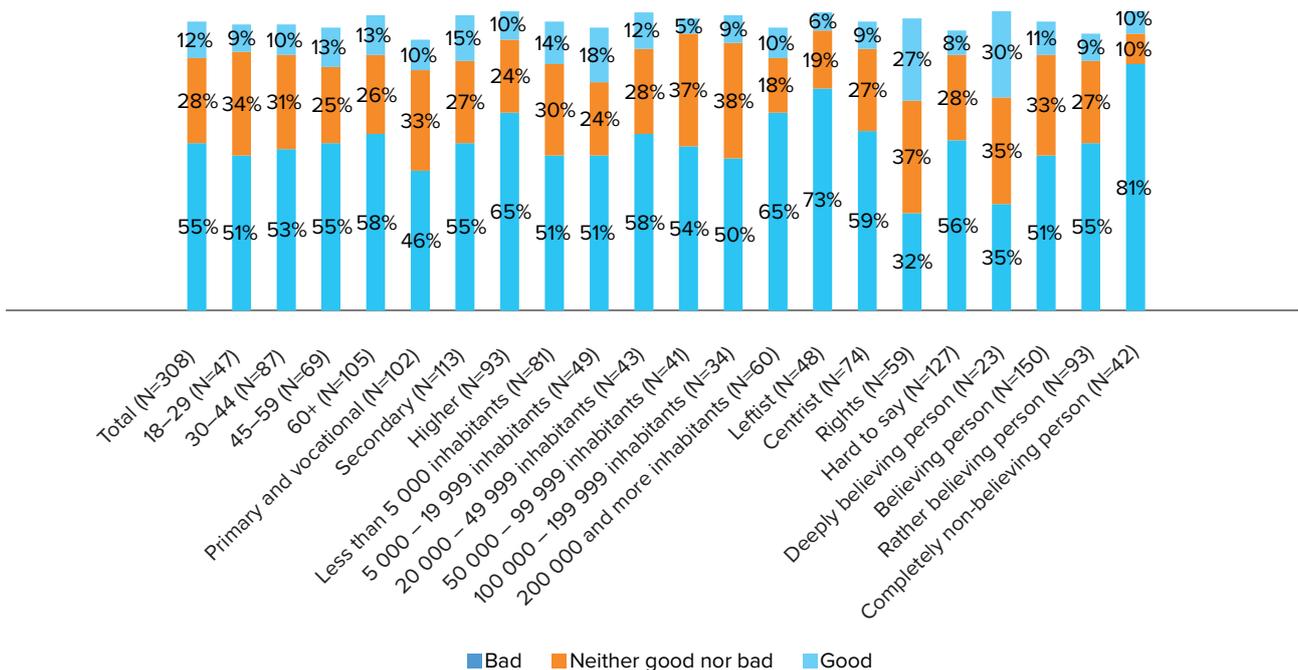


ASSESSMENT OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN POLAND

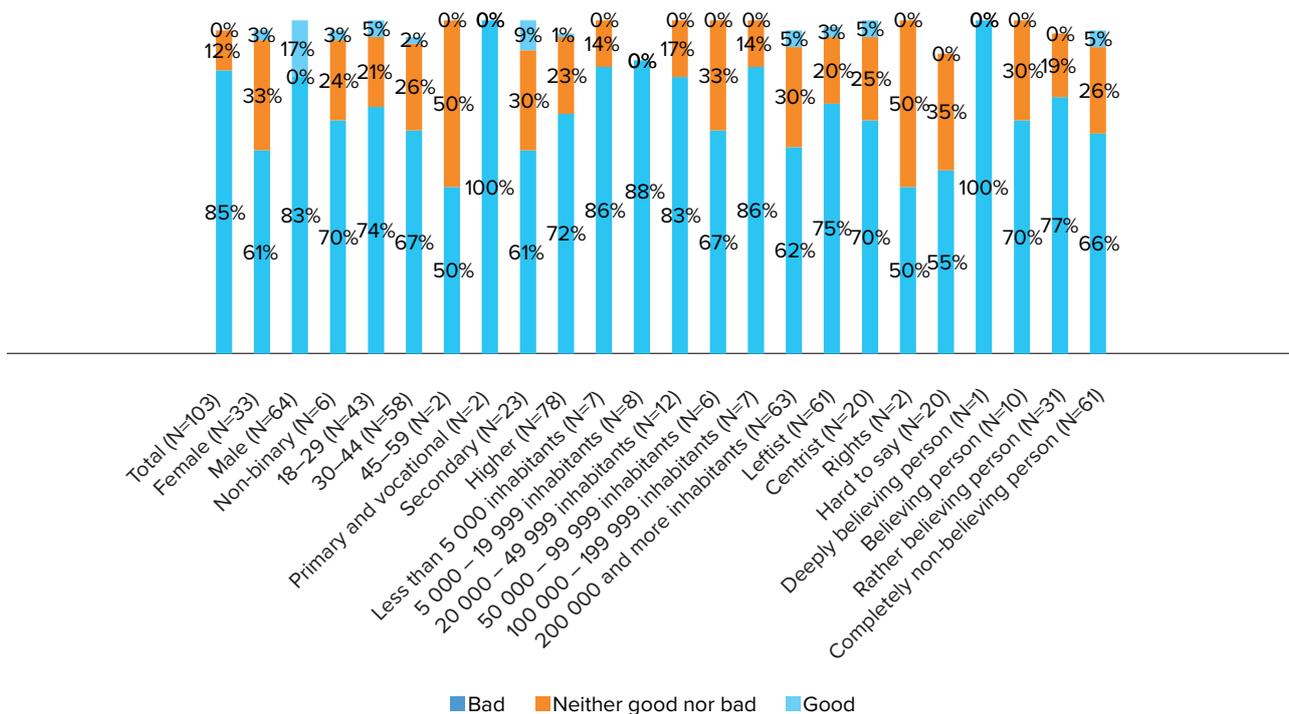
7. Overall, how do you assess the current economic situation in Poland? Is it:



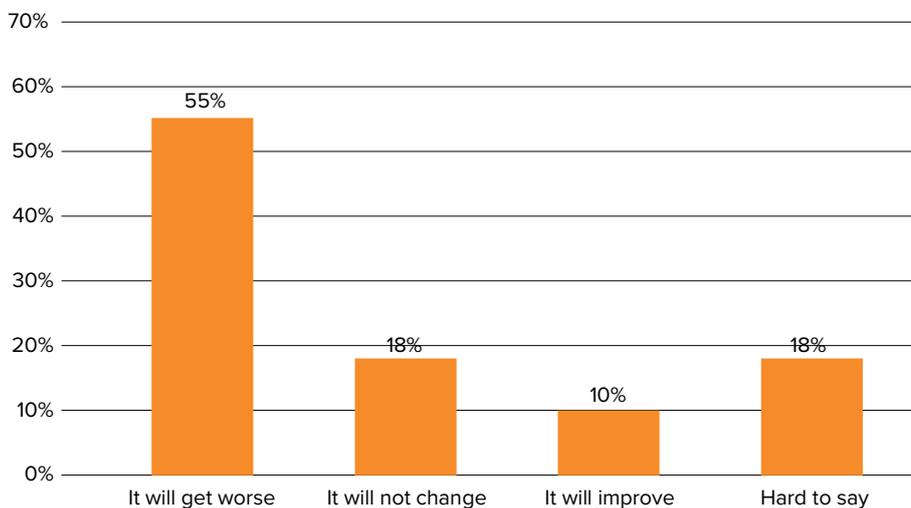
7a. Overall, how do you assess the current economic situation in Poland? Is it: (women)



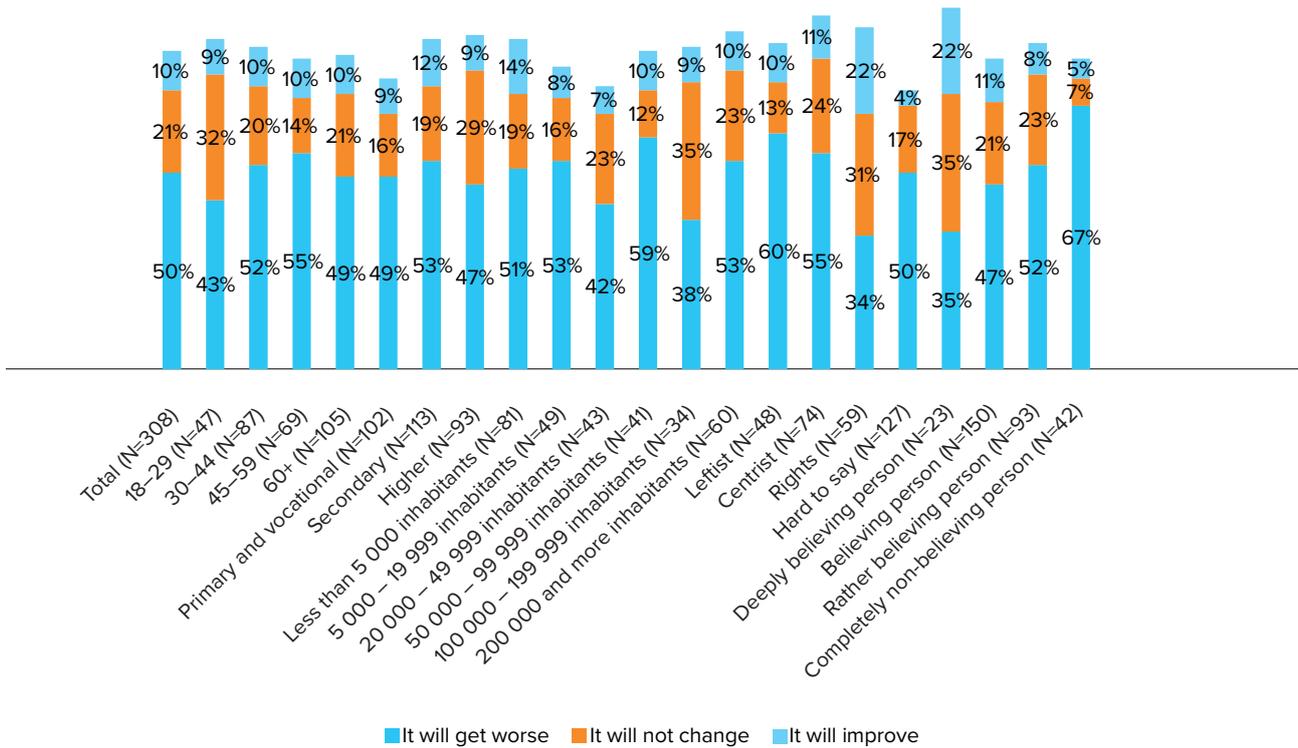
7b. Overall, how do you assess the current economic situation in Poland? Is it: (LGBTQ+)



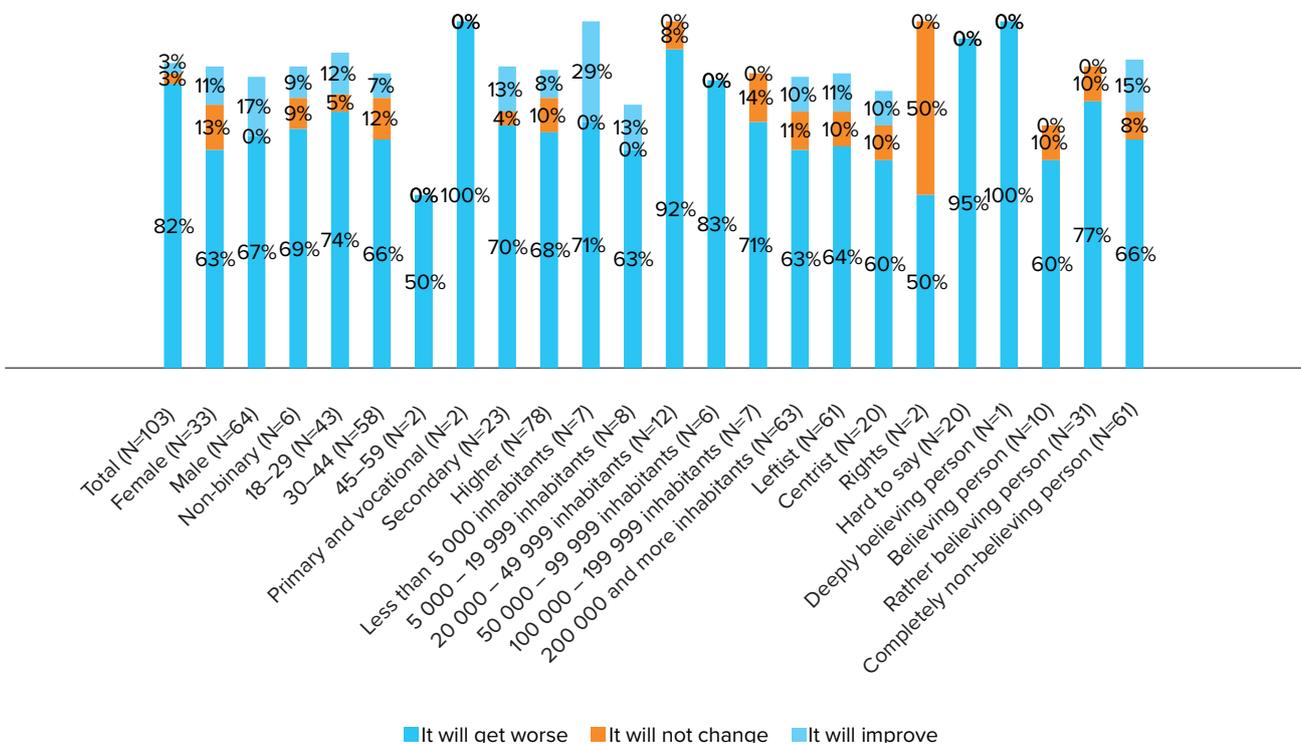
8. In your opinion, in the coming year, will the economic situation in Poland:



8a. In your opinion, in the coming year, will the economic situation in Poland: (women)

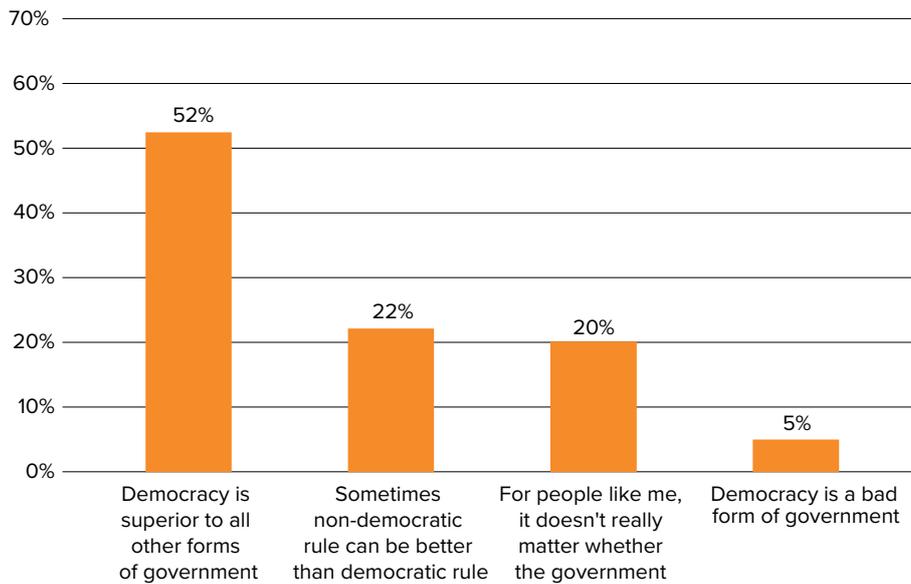


8b. In your opinion, in the coming year, will the economic situation in Poland: (LGBTQ+)

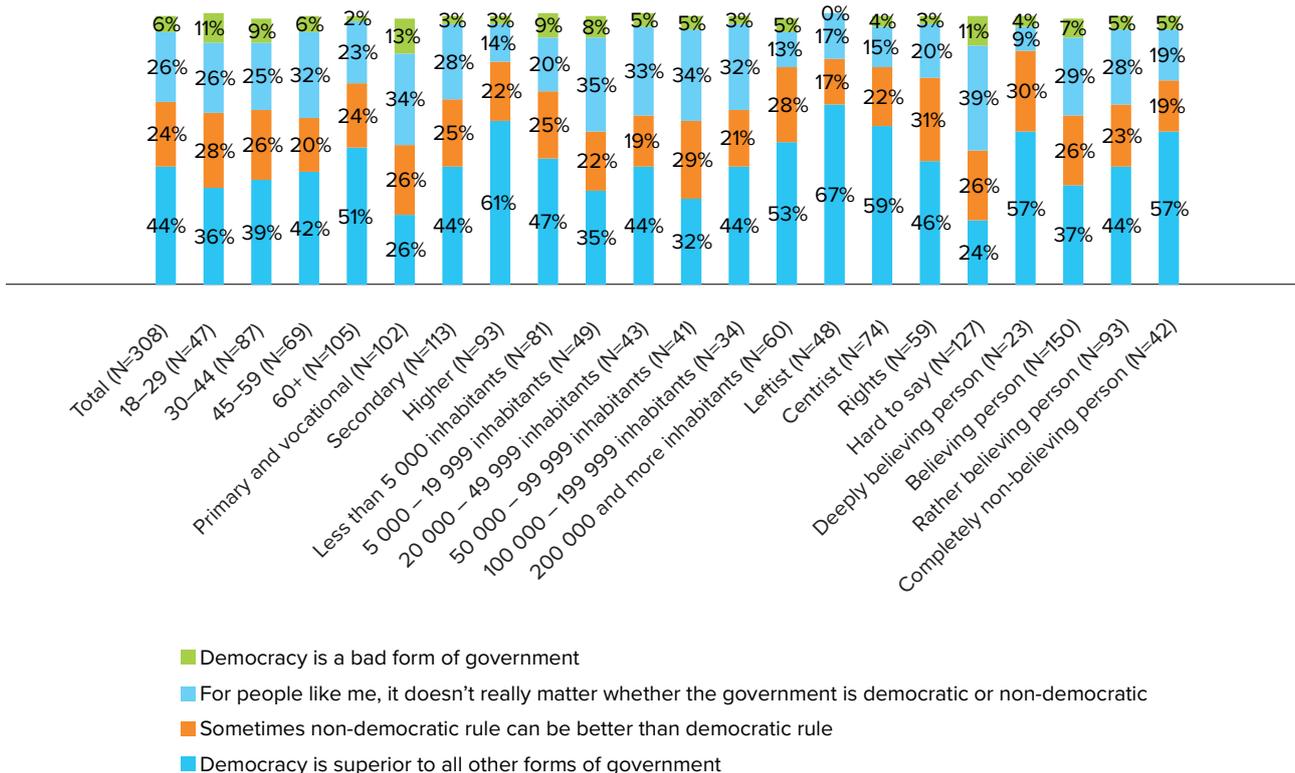


ATTITUDE TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

9. Which of the given statements about democracy is closest to you?

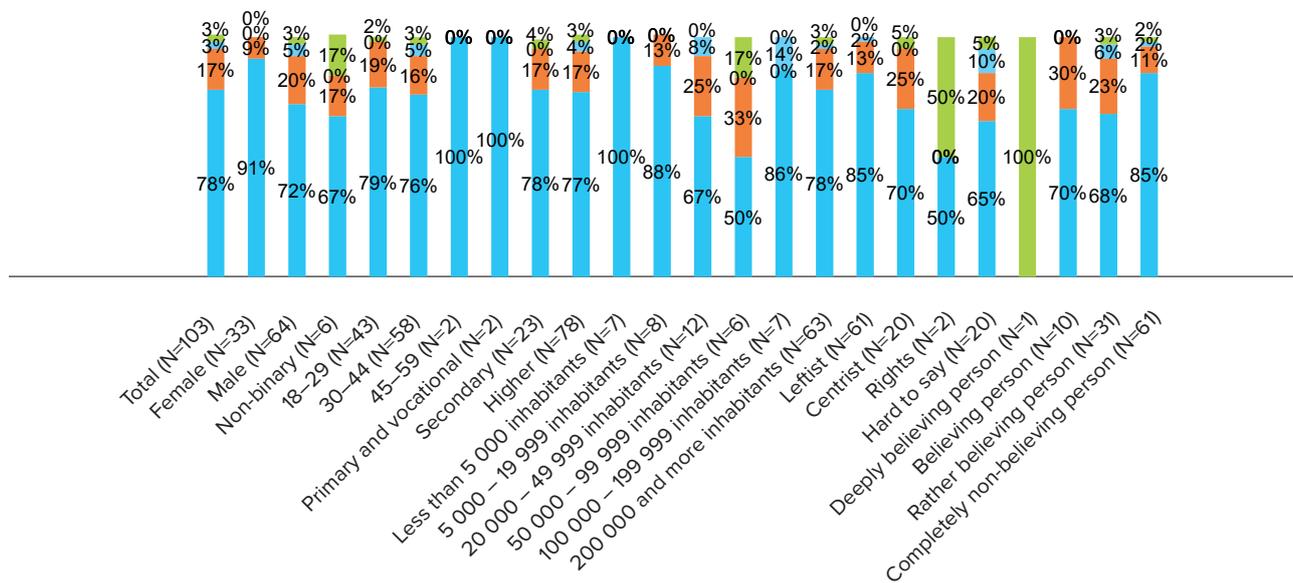


9a. Which of the given statements about democracy is closest to you? (Women)



- Democracy is a bad form of government
- For people like me, it doesn't really matter whether the government is democratic or non-democratic
- Sometimes non-democratic rule can be better than democratic rule
- Democracy is superior to all other forms of government

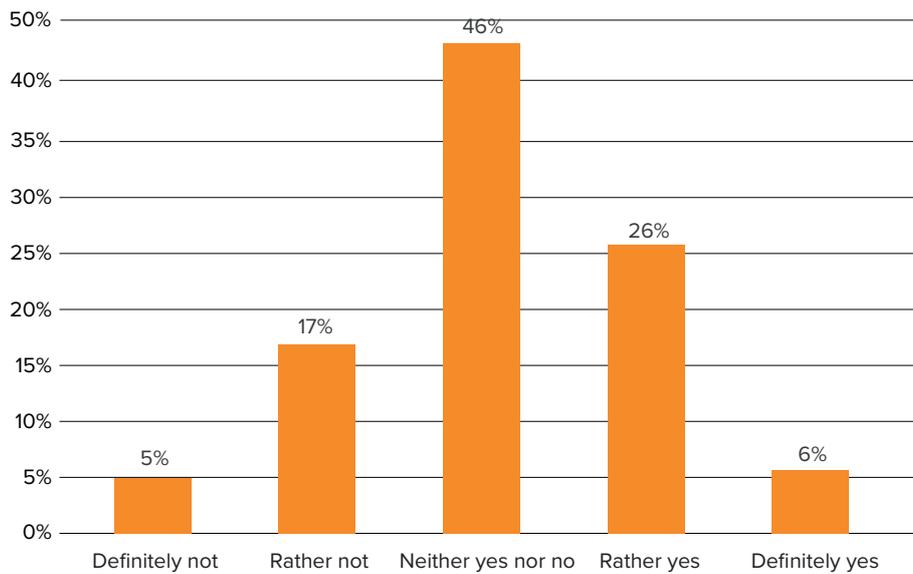
9b. Which of the given statements about democracy is closest to you? (LGBTQ+)



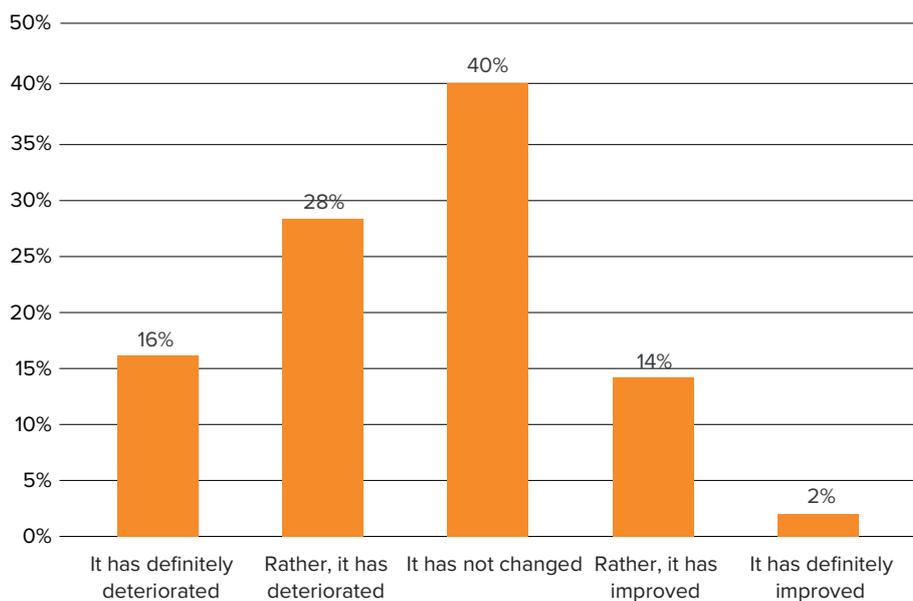
- Democracy is a bad form of government
- For people like me, it doesn't really matter whether the government is democratic or non-democratic
- Sometimes non-democratic rule can be better than democratic rule
- Democracy is superior to all other forms of government

WOMEN'S SENSE OF SECURITY

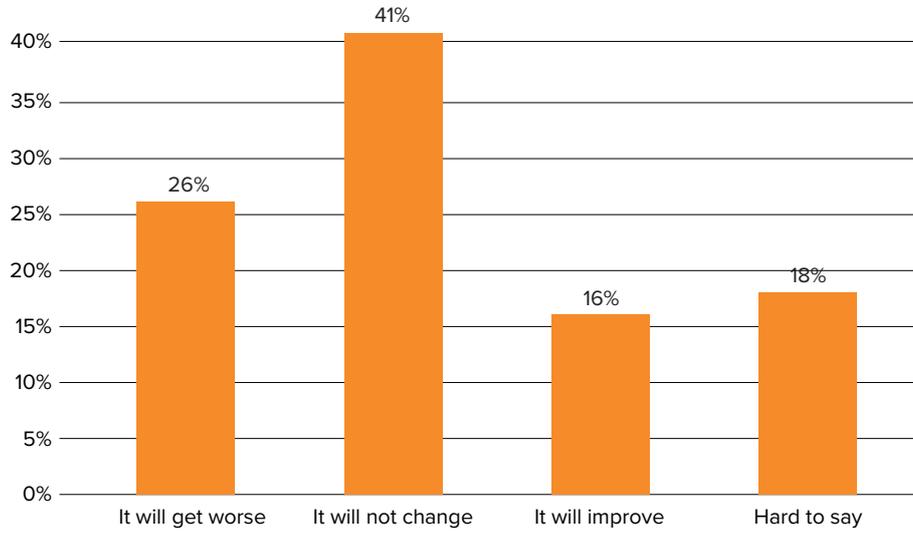
10a. In general, do you feel safe in Poland?



11a. Over the past five years, is the sense of security of pregnant women in Poland:

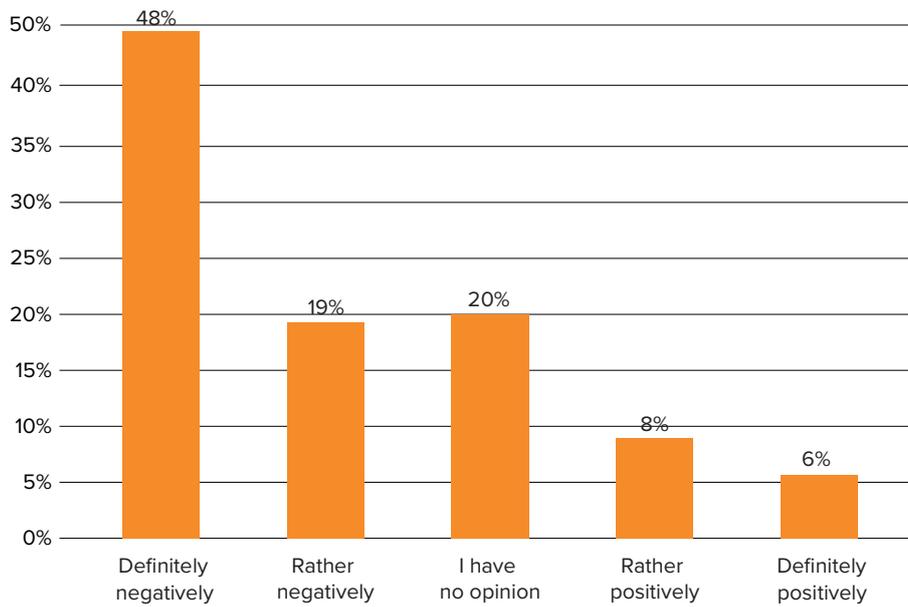


12a. Over the next year, how do you think the sense of security of pregnant women in Poland:

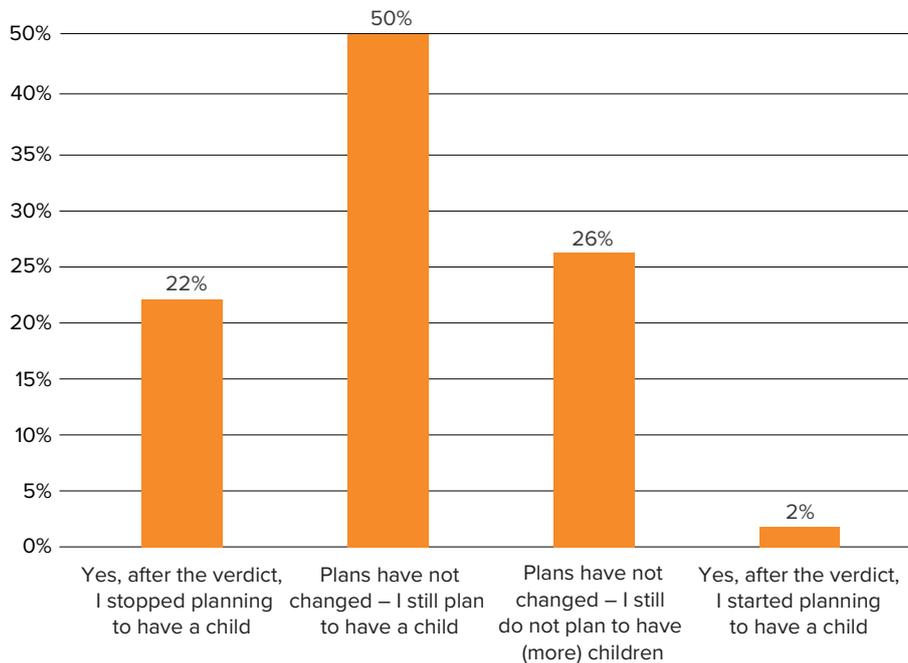


THE SOCIAL SITUATION OF WOMEN

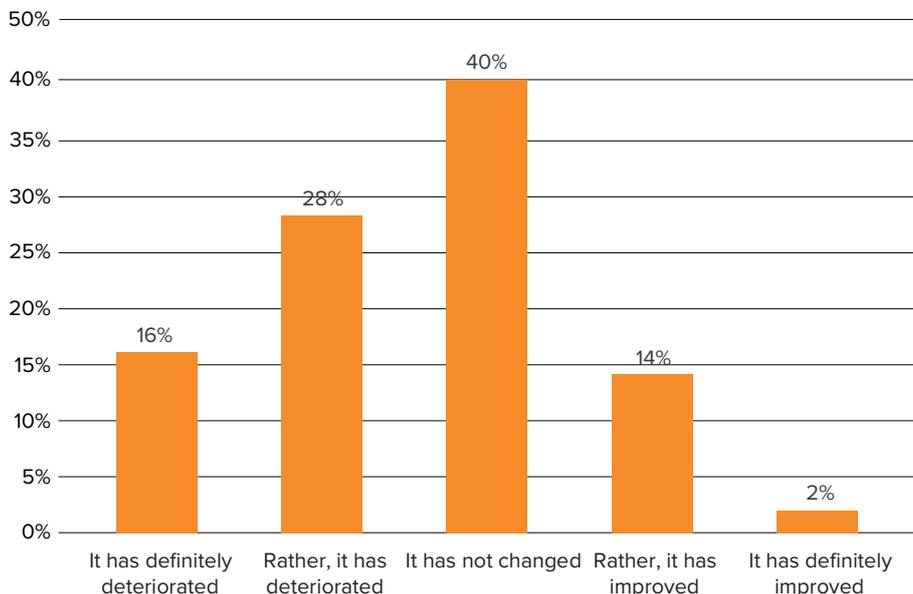
13a. How do you assess the constitutional court's October 22, 2020, ruling on abortion, which significantly restricted the possibility of legal abortion in Poland?



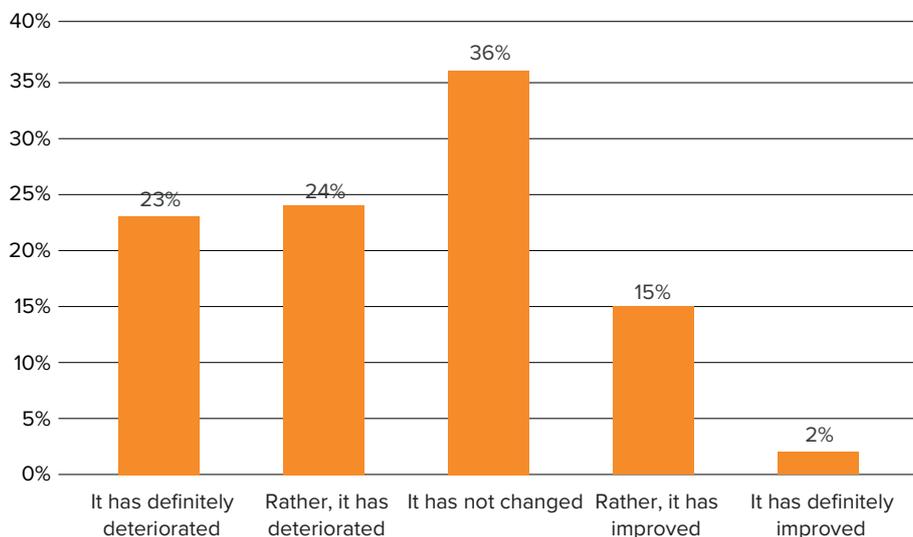
14a. Did your plans to have a child change after the constitutional court ruling?



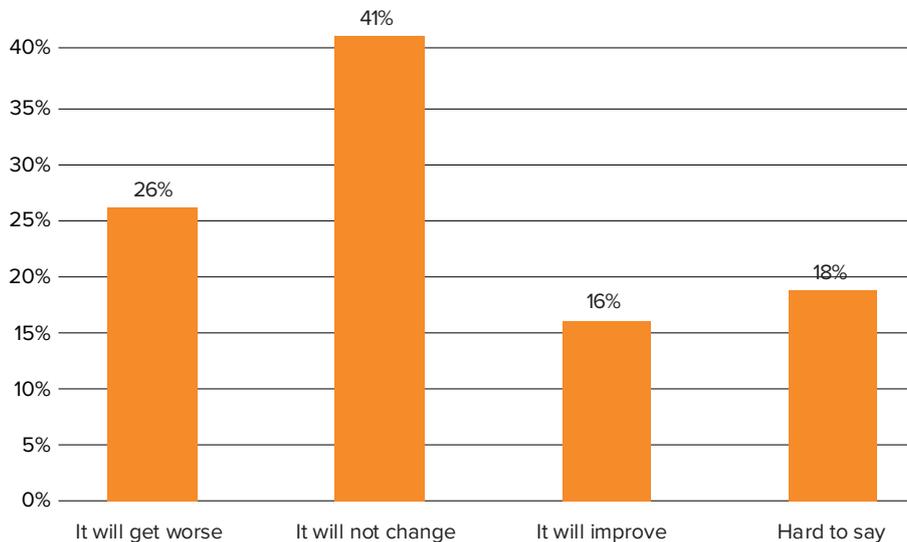
15a. In your opinion, over the past five years, access to reliable gynecological and obstetric care:



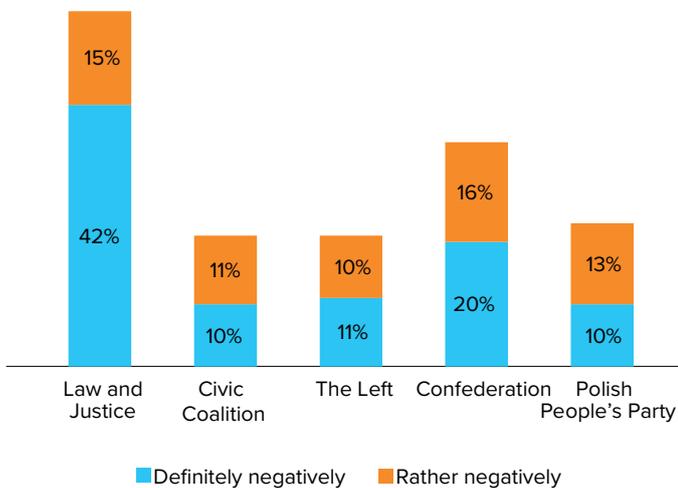
16a. In your opinion, over the past five years, access to infertility treatment (including in vitro):



17a. In your opinion, over the past five years, access to contraception (including emergency contraception, the so-called “morning-after pill”):

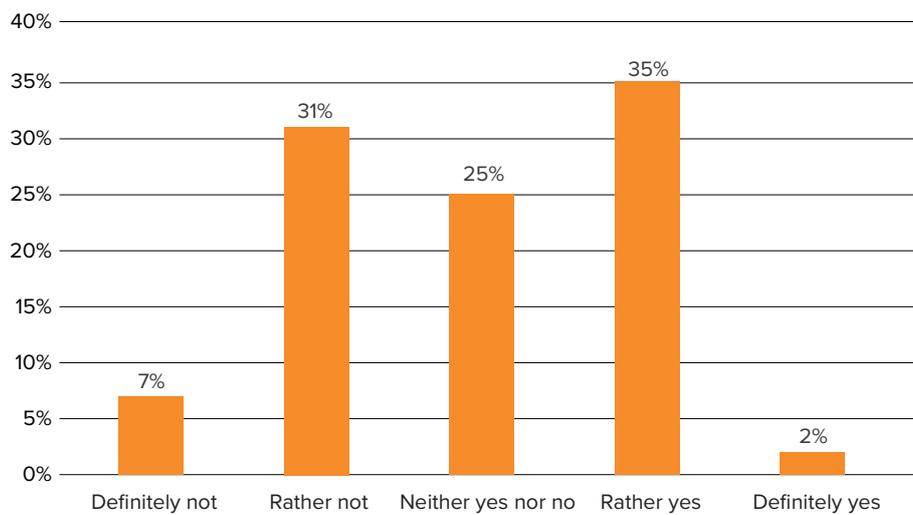


18a. How do you rate the women’s rights activities by the various political parties over the past five years:

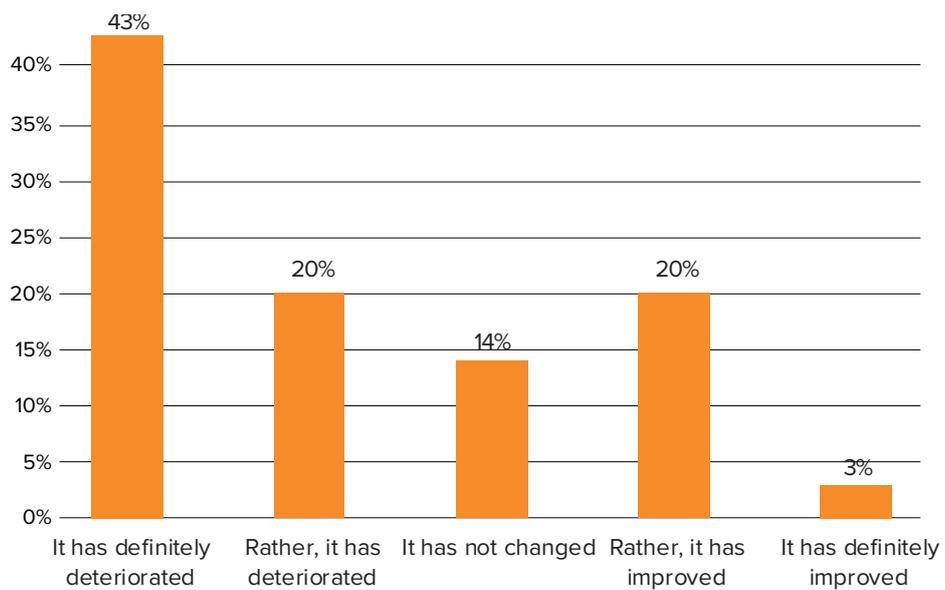


SENSE OF SECURITY OF LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

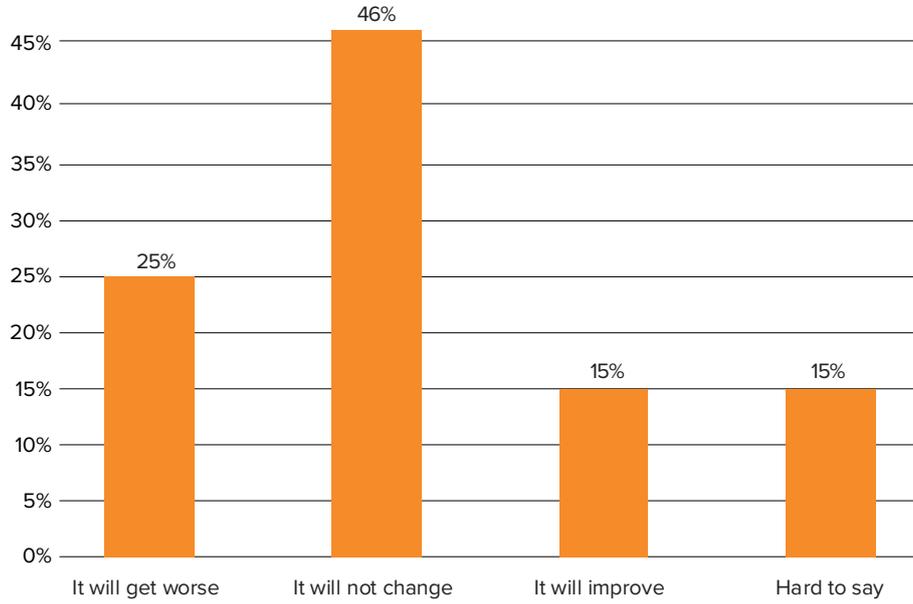
10b. In general, do you feel safe in Poland?



11b. In your opinion, over the past five years, has the sense of security of LGBTQ+ people in Poland:

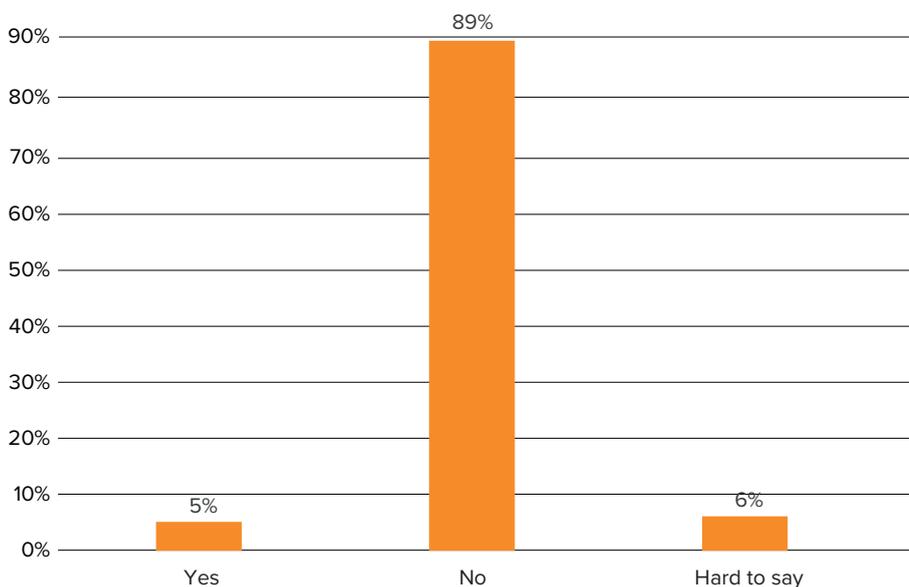


12b. Over the next year, how do you think the sense of security of LGBTQ+ people in Poland:

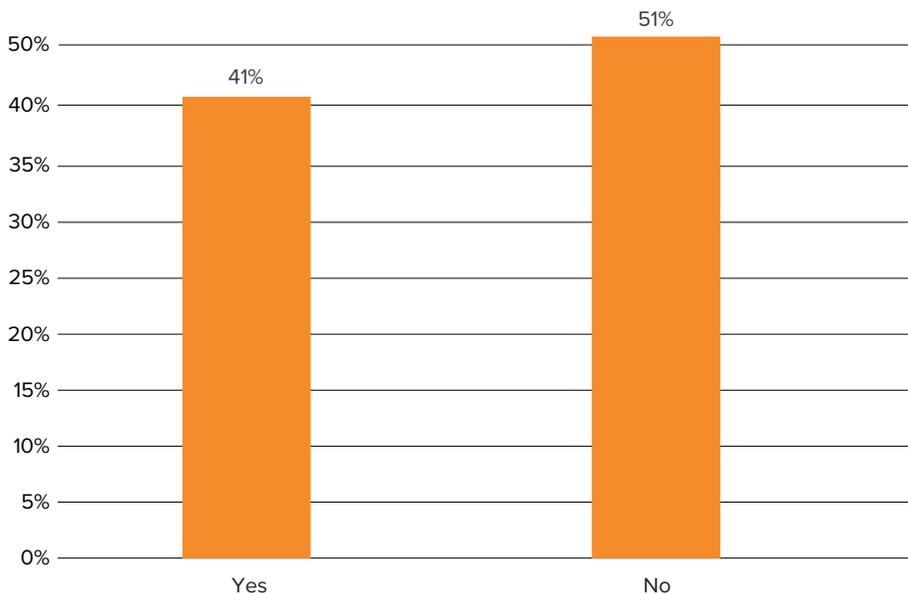


LGBTQ+ PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE

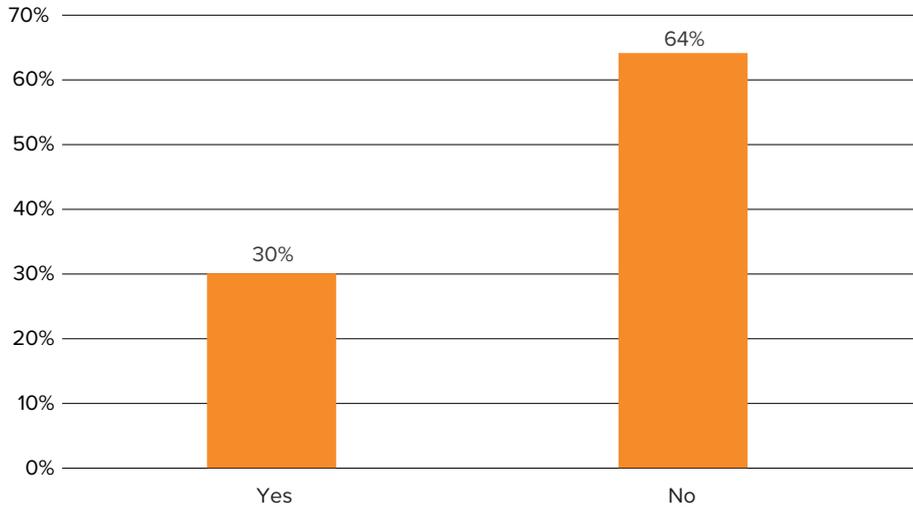
13b. Over the past year, have you experienced physical violence because of your orientation or gender identity?



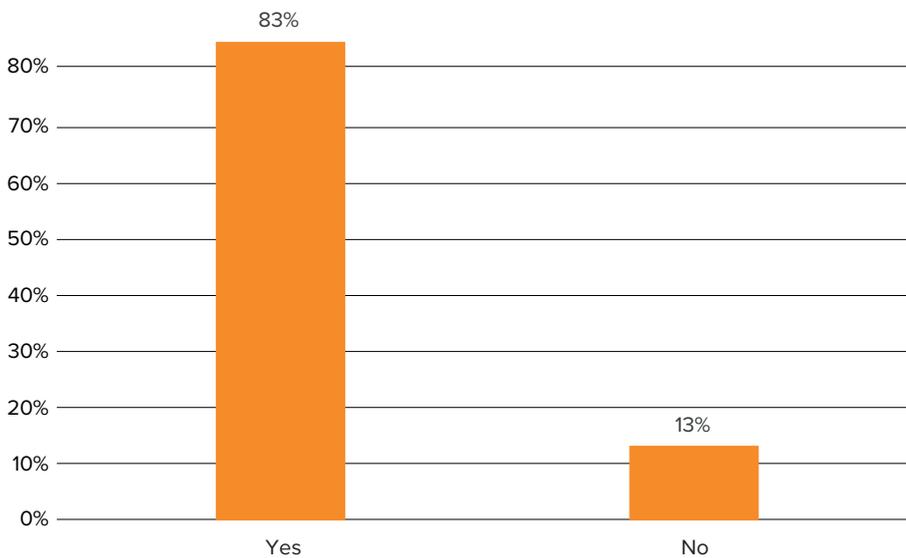
14b. Have you experienced verbal violence based on your orientation or gender identity in the past year?



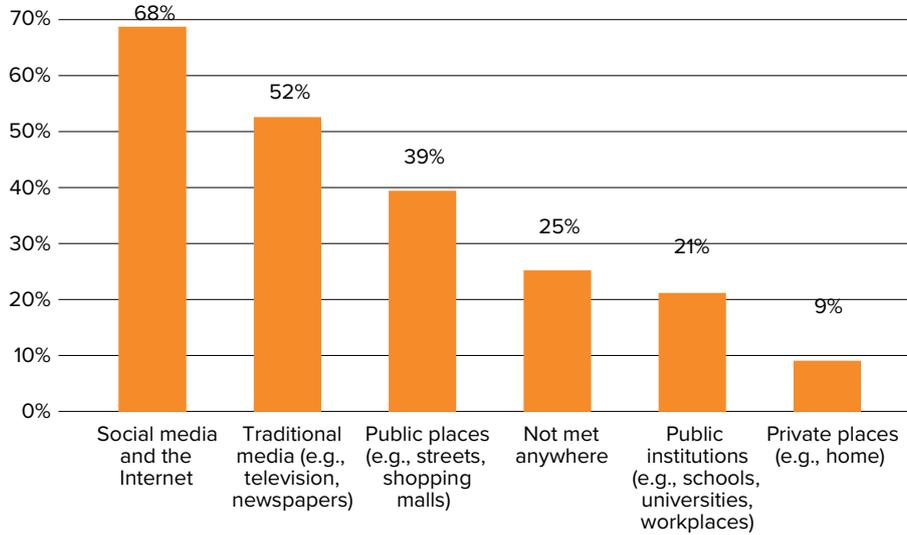
15b. During the past year, have you witnessed the use of physical violence against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity?



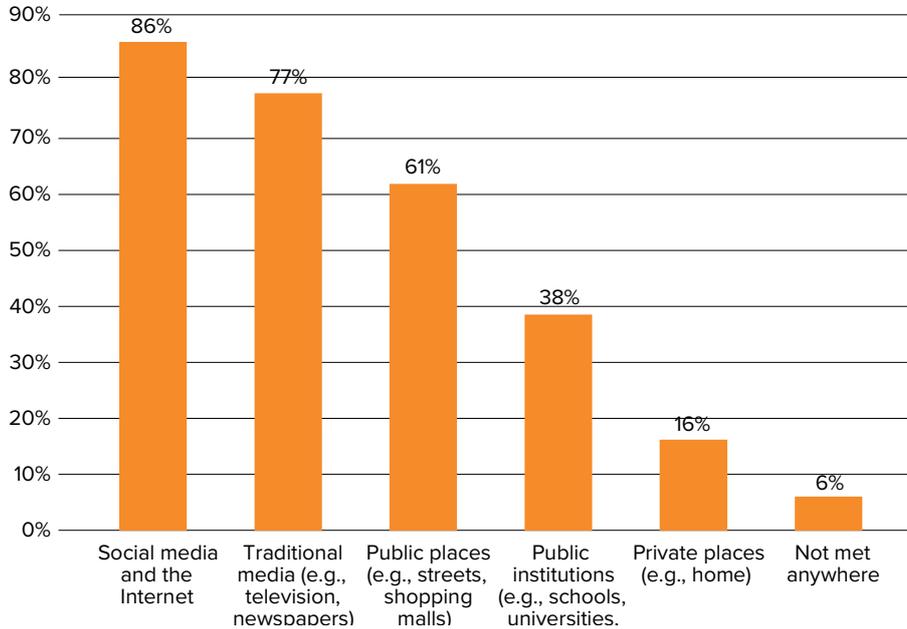
16b. During the past year, have you witnessed the use of hate speech against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity?



17b. Where, within the last year, have you encountered (directly or indirectly) physical violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity?

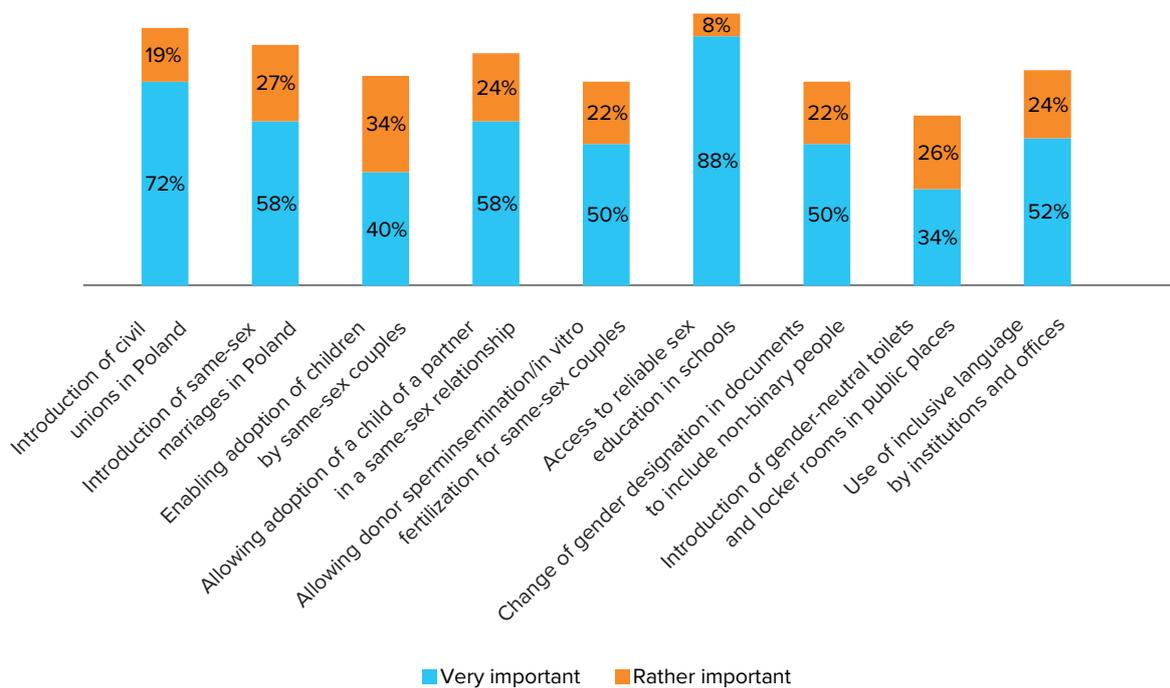


18b. Where, within the last year, have you encountered (directly or indirectly) verbal violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity?

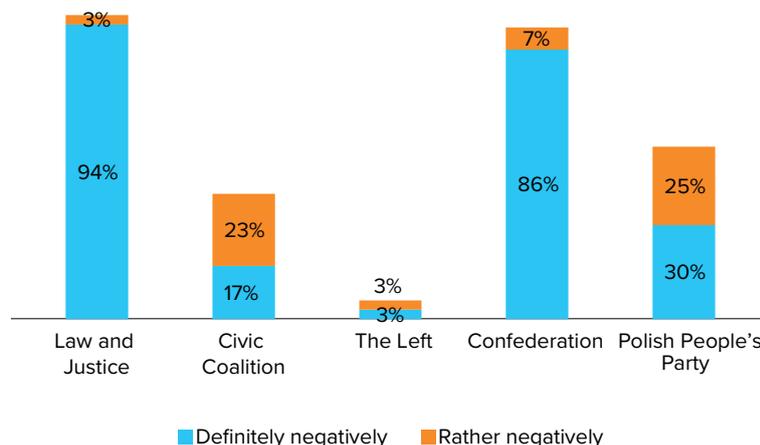


SOCIAL SITUATION OF LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

19b. On a scale of 1–5, please indicate to what extent the implementation of the following changes in Poland is important to you:



20b. How would you rate the efforts for LGBTQ+ rights by the various parties over the past five years:



QUALITATIVE STUDY

Results

WOMEN'S SOCIAL SITUATION

Sample structure

Four women aged 27–45 with higher education participated in the in-depth interviews.

Among the respondents were a self-employed woman, a psychotherapist and a managerial position in the accounting department.

Participants in the study identified themselves as women's rights activists.

They carried out this activity in professional (1 person) and nonprofessional (3 people) activities.

General assessment of the situation of women in poland

The overall situation of women in Poland was assessed rather negatively by the respondents.

Certainly as a whole we are in a very difficult situation, as if I had to look at the whole of Poland.

(self-employed, 27yo)

General assessment of the situation of women in Poland

Speaking about the current realities of life in Poland, the respondents referred to the political situation, which they assessed unequivocally badly, pointing to the lack of respect for women's rights by the current ruling party (Law and Justice):

The current government is eminently anti-women and because of the fact that most of the power there is held by men and women who do not identify with women's rights at all.

(chief accountant, 45yo)

Politically, it is rather weak. The ruling party, it's with what its representatives say, it tends to replicate stereotypes about female and male roles. (...) It seems to me that our country is very far from treating women subjectively and looking at their issues with empathy.

(psychotherapist, 27yo)

The biggest problems for women in Poland

- 1 Gender wage discrimination
- 2 Discrimination in the labor market – access to work and particular professions
- 3 „Invisible work” of women in the area of household duties and shared child-care
- 4 Physical and verbal violence against women
- 5 Menstrual poverty
- 6 Restriction of reproductive rights

1. Gender wage discrimination

Respondents point out that women continue to earn less than men, doing the same jobs and having the same work experience. This problem is described based on the survey participants' own experience:

My salary as chief accountant was always less than that of my husband, who was also chief accountant. Even when I attained the same experience as him, I still never matched his salary.

(chief accountant, 45yo)

Inequality of wages (...) I experienced this myself in one of my former companies, where the difference was several thousand dollars between me and an employee in the same position, a man.

(self-employed, 27yo)

2. Discrimination in the labor market – access to work and particular professions

Women will experience difficulties related to the openness and accessibility of certain professions on the basis of gender. Taking up careers or pursuing interests that go beyond traditional gender role patterns is associated with numerous barriers posed by society. Access to certain professions remains a problem:

Wherever you look, if you want to determine how many girls' soccer teams there are in any city, you can see how little access there is.

(chief accountant, 45yo)

Exclusion of women in various environments, such as the IT environment. That's how I've noticed that there are far fewer women working in such places, but there are also fewer being accepted during recruitment.

(psychotherapist, 27yo)

Resistance to hiring women because of the risk of pregnancy or being offered inferior employment conditions because of it also seems to be important:

Reluctance to hire women who are of childbearing age. Especially in private companies. Women are encouraged to switch to B2B, and with B2B they are entitled to virtually no privileges and maternity leave.

(self-employed, 27yo)

The unfavorable attitude of society, which involves scorning and belittling women's competence and skills in certain fields, was also cited as a problem:

Girls are discouraged and marginalized. There was a [soccer] competition where girls participated in a tournament. Comments from the audience, boys of the same age, were so vile that the referee had to stop the match and admonish the audience several times. These are our little daily lives.

(chief accountant, 45yo)

3. „Invisible work” of women in the area of household duties and shared childcare

Women's unpaid labor is a phenomenon with a significant impact on the economic sphere and the functioning of society.

This activity often remains „invisible” and is treated as a natural consequence resulting from women's fulfillment of traditional social roles.

Respondents point to this phenomenon as a result of existing stereotypes and an element that influences women's additional workload.

A guy just stays after hours at work until 9pm and is a hero, he will do the shopping and is a hero, and peel potatoes, he is a hero. And if he stays sick with the children, then in general all female colleagues envy such a husband. And you being a woman do all this (...).

(chief accountant, 45yo)

In addition to the problem of sharing household responsibilities, this phenomenon is particularly evident in the area of childcare:

At work, I notice great inequality when it comes to childcare. Still, despite the fact that times seem to be different, with some exceptions, women are taking care of the children, and as I talk to these parents and there is a frequent belief that this is somehow a woman's responsibility and that this is just the way it should be. It's natural in their mindset that husbands don't share in the upbringing of these children, but that they help them. I see a tremendous overload on women that comes with this. It then manifests itself in depression, in discouragement and lack of strength to live and [to] do something for themselves. Taking care of a child is not treated as a woman's job, which I do, but as a duty.

(psychotherapist, 27yo)

Who to clean the nose of a small child (infant) or to change the first thing one thinks – a woman?

(chief accountant, 45yo)

4. Physical and verbal violence against women

Another problem cited by female respondents was the use of violence (including sexual violence) – both physical and verbal.

I for one am still sensitive to the subject of harassment of women, both physical and verbal. The verbal one is still so acquiescent, it's still hard to say no, to show the boundary, because we feel silly, because we don't want to hear that we're over-sensitive or that we're messed up in the head from this feminism.

(self-employed, 27yo)

The issue of violence against women, who don't really have the option of real support in the current system. They are afraid to move out of the house because at the same time they are economically disadvantaged, they are condemned by this to be stuck in such an arrangement, because they do not know how they will manage on their own or with a child. Especially if they decided to move out when they were not working professionally before, or if they earn less and have dependent children.

(self-employed, 34yo).

5. Menstrual poverty

One respondent also pointed to the problem of menstrual poverty and the lack of adequate education in this area.

Few people in Poland know what menstrual poverty is and how widespread it is in Poland, how much education about menstruation is limping along, how much education about how we can take care of ourselves during menstruation is limping along.

(self-employed, 27yo)

6. Restriction of reproductive rights

There are 4 topics related to respecting reproductive rights:

- 1 Access to abortion;
- 2 Access to contraception;
- 3 Access to and quality of gynecological and obstetric care; and
- 4 Access to infertility treatment (including in vitro methods).

1. access to abortion

The Constitutional Court's October 22, 2020 ruling on abortion was the most limiting to women's reproductive rights to date – making it impossible to perform pregnancy

terminations due to lethal defects in the fetus. Lack of access to abortion was cited as a significant problem by all respondents, who felt this was a significant restriction on their ability to decide about themselves and their bodies.

The introduction of the abortion ruling was frightening. We received as women a huge slap from the authorities (...).

(self-employed, 27yo)

For me, the most important thing is the right to free choice. And both in terms of the form of contraception, the right to be pregnant, to carry a pregnancy, not to be pregnant. The right to decide for myself.

(chief accountant, 45yo)

2. access to gynecological and obstetric care

There was no consensus on the evaluation of state obstetric care. Some respondents distinguished Polish obstetrics positively compared to other European countries in terms of the availability and specialization of doctors.

In terms of free access to obstetric care, it seems to me that there is good access, compared to countries that would seem somehow richer or more aware, such as England, Poland, in terms of the scope of obstetric care, this care is better much more specialized.

(psychotherapist, 27yo)

However, most of the opinions expressed referred to the poor quality of obstetric care and the non-subjective treatment of patients.

In 2015 (...) I wanted to give birth in [name of city], and there I was told that the doctor himself decides [whether to perform a cesarean section]. I said that I had a referral from my doctor and I needed to be sure because I had a high[risk] pregnancy and had miscarried several times. [I was told] „You can't be so sure, because here

the head doctor decides it, the cesarean section.” I gave birth in a private hospital.

(chief accountant, 45yo)

Respondents make a clear distinction between access to private and public gynecological and obstetric care. They point to the much worse accessibility and the risk of dealing with a doctor using the conscience clause for treatment reimbursed by the National Health Fund, as well as the high prices of private treatment.

My gynecologist recently charged me £280 for a visit, because a cytology test had to be done, and since I’m from a cancer family, I have to do this cytology at least twice a year. State gynecologist I’ve never been to, I have 45 (...) I don’t know anyone of my acquaintances who uses the state health service when it comes to gynecologist. (...) I gave birth in a private hospital. Also a question of money. Not everyone has 8 – 10 thousand to shell out for a private birth.

(chief accountant, 45yo)

The problem of accessibility to gynecological treatment increases with the remoteness of the place of residence from large cities.

The problem is definitely greater in smaller towns, where women, on top of that, often don’t really have a choice of which doctor to go to.

(self-employed, 34yo)

3. access to contraception

The restriction of reproductive rights is also related to access to contraception (including emergency contraception). Respondents distinguish between access to contraception in the context of state and private treatment, pointing to problems in obtaining a prescription for emergency contraception.

I recently learned that there is such a thing as virtual clinics, through which you can get a prescription for emergency contraception for about 30–40 PLN. This is difficult for women who are under 18, because here they can no longer necessarily get such a prescription and use such an app. But for me as a person who is around the national average, it's not a big problem. But a person who is in a more difficult financial situation would have to pay for the prescription and for the drugs. That's why I think it's not good, because emergency contraception should be free.

(self-employed, 27yo)

4. access to infertility treatment (including in vitro methods)

Respondents believe that in Poland, access to the use of IVF is significantly hampered by the high cost of the procedure and the lack of reimbursement at the state level.

At this moment it is a very expensive method in our country, from what I have found, talking about this topic, couples who go for it, do it once, and after failure a large group give up for financial reasons mainly.

(chief accountant, 45yo)

It seems to me that we in Poznań have reimbursement, but I know that it is extremely expensive and if it is the case that you have to pay for it, it is a bit of a fight against infertility for the elite.

(self-employed, 27yo)

Causes of gender discrimination

Three areas were listed as reasons for gender discrimination:

- 1 family upbringing;
- 2 the role of politicians; and
- 3 the role of the church.

All three areas play an important role in reinforcing gender stereotypes and the patriarchal social order.

1. upbringing that supports gender stereotypes

A woman no longer has to have physical strength to work in a mine, for example, she can have a position that does not require physical strength. And somewhere in the back of our minds we have these blockades, that a woman drives the bus and it's strange. And it sits in us, I'm from that generation, where there are certain things for me that arouse surprise. (...) It sits inside, upbringing and what environments we turn in [matters].

(chief accountant, 45yo)

2. the role of politicians

Political parties that come to power have an influence on the formation of the law. When it comes to laws that directly affect women, politicians have a strong influence on the shape of public discourse and their statements also affect the worldview of voters. Not only do voters elect politicians whose worldview suits them, but also the way the discourse is conducted influences the worldview of their audience.

(self-employed, 34yo)

3. the role of the church

A huge role is played by the church, the woman is a nobody. The church and our faith does not respect women at all. No women have functions. The girls are for the pouring of flowers, and for the most important thing, helping at the altar, there is a boy. From a young age, people who are believers have this pattern instilled in them that a woman can sweep the priest on the sacristy.

(chief accountant, 45yo)

The impact of the constitutional court ruling on the social situation of women

The Constitutional Court's ruling is assessed unequivocally negatively by female respondents. They point to the impact of the decision on many areas of women's lives, especially their psychological well-being and sense of security.

Several women have died because of the tribunal's ruling that doctors hesitated whether to perform an abortion or not, making it an immediate threat to life. Women certainly feel less safe, their needs or rights are so limited that there is no sense of subjectivity and being taken seriously.

(psychotherapist, 27yo)

According to the participants, the deterioration is mainly experienced by women who are in a bad financial situation.

Those who are most disadvantaged are those who are not able to financially cope. I, in such a situation, have enough money to go abroad and have an abortion.

(chief accountant, 45yo)

Let's be honest, this ruling has not affected women who can afford to have this abortion abroad. Women who are economically better off will be able to afford it anyway.

(self-employed, 34yo)

A point of contention among the participants turned out to be their opinion on how the Court's ruling changed women's attitudes toward pregnancy planning and starting a family. Some female respondents believe that family planning decisions remain independent of abortion regulations:

Young people don't delve into whether there is such a provision, they look at their lives here and now, whether I have a partner I can trust, whether I want to have this child, whether the partner wants it. I don't think it's so far-fetched that it will affect individual decisions to have a child. The problem only starts if something doesn't go as it should.

(chief accountant, 45yo)

The others, however, indicate higher levels of anxiety related to planning a pregnancy and possible health complications, which may influence the decision to forgo having a child:

A statistic recently fell into my hands (...) 68% of women say they don't want to have children. 68% are not women who never wanted to have these children, I just assume that they are women who have been discouraged or intimidated from doing so. I also belong to such a group. This is a very serious problem that affects not only women's life plans and psychological comfort, but also the state of the entire country in about a dozen years.

(self-employed, 27yo)

Female respondents also pointed to positive changes that have taken place in the last five years and after the Constitutional Court ruling. In response to the restriction of reproductive rights, there was a breakthrough related to social activism in the area of the struggle for women's rights, which resulted in greater access to education or the strengthening of intra-group solidarity.

Because paradoxically, the very difficult things that have been happening in our country recently, I think, have opened the eyes of many people. (...) I think that awareness has increased a lot, about how this abortion can be done, where to seek help, that awareness has increased about what this abortion can mean for many women, that it doesn't just have to be horrible, or that the woman has to have a difficult experience afterwards, that relief can appear.

(psychotherapist, 27yo)

The public debate opened up. I was not ready to hear from so many people on the street so many striking things about what rights a woman has and does not have. On the other hand, it was a moment of tremendous revolution and beautiful unification of women and great support from men. Such a bittersweet moment. Both the positive and negative consequences of this we still see today.

(self-employed, 27yo)

What would have to happen for the situation of women to improve?

According to the participants, the situation of women in Poland can be improved, however, for this change is needed in two areas:

- 1 Top-down – related to the change of authority and the applicable law; and
- 2 Bottom-up – related to social activities of pro-women's organizations, women's support and relevant education.

Change of power and dissolve such a strong relationship with the church. We won't influence society so easily and quickly, but I think the key will be for people to respect us.

(self-employed, 27yo).

Our work from the grassroots, from home, is very important to tell children, to spend a great deal of time on education in schools.

That's why I'm a strong supporter of the entry into schools of all organizations, foundations and associations that deal with these issues, women's rights, the fight against violence. Make age-appropriate programs for children, to show certain patterns, the effects of certain actions.

(45l, chief accountant)

What political parties can be allies of women?

Among the political parties that could become allies of women were mentioned: Left, Modern, Green Party. These parties are assessed as clearly declaring their positive attitude toward the fight for women's rights.

It's Modern and I think all left-wing parties.

(chief accountant, 45yo)

The biggest allies I assume are the Left and Together.

(self-employed, 27 yo).

Ambivalent attitudes were revealed toward two parties: the Civic Platform and Poland 2050.

I also have a lot of skepticism when it comes to the Poland 2050 party, I don't know how serious or true, sincere these various declarations are.

(psychotherapist, 27yo)

I don't quite trust Poland 2050 on this issue. Parties that are unable to clearly define themselves do not inspire my confidence. The platform is doing exactly the same thing.

(chief accountant, 45yo)

What NGOs can be allies of women?

Social organizations working for women's rights are rated unequivocally positive. The activities of associations and foundations provide support that women are unable to receive from the state.

When the State fails, women who don't have the support that should be provided at the public level have to use [support] through government organizations, which here if provide access to emergency contraception or abortion, but also provide support for women who are victims of domestic violence, which provide legal counseling. There are a whole host of organizations operating whether locally or nationally, and they do a far better job than the state. They act where the state fails.

(self-employed, 34yo)

Among the listed organizations supporting women were both nationwide and local foundations and associations:

- 1 Women's Rights Center
- 2 Feminoteka
- 3 Action Menstruation
- 4 Kulczyk Foundation
- 5 Abortion Without Borders
- 6 FEDERA Foundation for Women and Family Planning
- 7 Local Girls Movement

Women's rights and the development of democracy

When asked whether women's rights are related to the development of democracy, respondents answered unequivocally in the affirmative.

Yes, I think there is a translation. For example, when women got their suffrage, they started to be part of democracy. It is related. Women's rights, human rights and democracy. For me, these are three things that go hand in hand. One should keep up with the other, you can't

say we live in a democratic country and on the other hand violate human rights or women's rights.

(chief accountant, 45yo)

They also pointed out that Poland, by limiting human rights, is becoming less and less democratic.

Women's rights are human rights, so of course the basis of democracy is to respect women's rights. Poland is becoming less democratic. Yes, we are experiencing a crisis, if we have a system where human rights are violated, then we are not a democratic country.

(self-employed, 27yo)

A significant role for maintaining democracy in Poland seems to be its position as a member of the European Union.

However, we are in Europe for the time being. It will be hard to be a non-democratic country in Europe. If we want to be in the European Union as a partner, we have to be a democratic country, and we can't let those who see it differently come to the fore.

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(chief accountant, 45yo)

Assessing the future of women in poland

Attitudes toward the future of women in Poland are ambivalent – on the one hand, they are associated with a strong sense of uncertainty and fear of further deterioration of the situation in the context of reproductive rights, and on the other hand, with hope for improvement, which is based on a sense of solidarity and increased activity of society in the fight for women's rights.

Anxiety, about how the situation will be, given the progressive crisis in this area. But also hope that this crisis will be broken at some point, there will be some kind of turnaround and the situation will improve. But at the moment the situation does not look good, and there is no indication that it will improve.

(self-employed, 27yo)

There is a great deal of uncertainty related to what will happen, because these rights are being greatly curtailed. There is also this change in consciousness, which can give hope, but uncertainty is dominant. Because I don't know what can happen. And I would rather leave Poland in the future.

(psychotherapist, 27yo)

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SOCIAL SITUATION OF LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

Sample structure

- 1 Four people participated in interviews described their gender identity as female (1 homo-sexual, 1 pansexual, 2 bisexual), and 2 as non-binary (one of whom described their orientation as pansexual). Participants were between the 26 and 27 years old with secondary and higher education.
- 2 Participants have the following professions: psychologists, psychotherapists, computer graphic designers, copywriters.
- 3 Participants specified that issues of the LGBTQ+ community are important to them because of their membership in this group and their personal experience of discrimination in various areas.

Life in Poland for LGBTQ+ people

Life in Poland is assessed ambivalently by respondents – they see advantages, however, when asked about the overall quality of life in Poland, they most often point to the social inequalities and problems of discrimination based on orientation or gender identity that affect them. Emotions of shame, anger and sadness are associated with living in Poland. Respondents do not feel much of a bond connecting them to the country, although they do happen to feel a sense of belonging to the local community within their place of residence.

I don't live well in Poland, because my earnings are not disproportionate to the demands of everyday life, because I don't have the same rights as heterosexual couples. Politics in general pisses me off, I think it's a shame. I don't have much affiliation with Poland as a country. And I am rather ashamed to live in Poland.

(bisexual female, 26yo)

As long as I don't think too much about the fact that I live in Poland, it's ok. I have a home, relatives, friends, places where I feel comfortable and safe. I prefer to think that I live in Poznan than in Poland. When I think that I live in Poland I feel sad. I feel hurt, abused and disrespected by this country, both as a woman and as a queer person. I live in a country that does not respect human rights and uses minorities for political ploys. The fact that I don't accept this has taken so much energy out of me over the past years that I have slowly begun to cut myself off from the Polish language and information from the country.

(non-binary, pansexual 26yo)

General assessment of the situation of LGBTQ+ people in Poland

Although some of the problems of discrimination are common to the entire LGBTQ+ community, the situation of individuals differs within the group due to its inhomogeneous nature. Depending on sexual orientation and gender identity, different problems become apparent:

From my point of view, lesbians are better off than gays, because there is harassment of men all the time when it comes to this fact. And women are associated for some reason by some with the porn business, so that is also problematic, although from what I see myself, well, accepting two women walking somewhere close or holding hands is easier than men. Bisexuals unnoticed often, because when they choose, they are treated as either homosexuals or heterosexuals, and it is difficult for me to comment on trans people, while from what I see, it is a situation treated by some as ridiculous.

(homosexual female, 26yo)

The biggest problems of LGBTQ+ people

The difficulties faced by non-heteronormative people are evident in many areas of social life. Seven main categories appeared in interviews:

- 1 Lack of adequate legal solutions related to the legalization of marriage and having children;
- 2 Obstacles to the transit process and the medicalization of transit;
- 3 Physical and verbal violence;
- 4 Problems in the area of sex education;
- 5 Insecurity, feeling of anxiety;
- 6 Difficulties associated with coming out; and
- 7 The disempowerment of LGBTQ+ people and their issues.

1. Lack of adequate legal solutions related to legalizing marriage and having children

In Poland, same-sex couples are not allowed to marry and adopt children. It is also impossible to adopt a child of a partner from a previous relationship or undergo in vitro procedures and insemination with donor sperm.

Marriage or child-bearing issues are possible abroad, but the Polish state does not legally recognize such weddings, and the same is true of the recognition of single-sex parenthood for children born or adopted outside the country's borders. For this reason, same-sex couples who do not plan to move out may choose not to take such action.

Although I don't feel it super directly somehow, because I don't plan to have children, so it doesn't affect me somehow that I can't have children legally. If I want to get married, I'll already have a problem. Weddings abroad are not recognized in Poland, and I also don't feel the need to do a wedding symbolically in another country and not have the benefit of it in Poland.

(bisexual female, 27yo)

2. Obstacles to the transit process and the medicalization of transit

Transgender people face difficulties in accessing transit due to, among other things, the high cost of treatments and procedures, the small number of specialists, and the related problem of the medical community's attitudes toward transgender people.

Lack of representation and sound education in medicine as to transgender people. The medicalization of transgender people is a terrible phenomenon.

(non-binary, 27yo)

Obstacles are also related to the course of court cases.

Access to transit – finding a doctor whose medical care will be provided. The judicial process of transit is complicated and depends on the decision of the individual court – you have to sue your parents, if you have children, you can lose rights to them. For all intents and purposes, the lack of rights for trans people is destroying Polish families.

(non-binary, pansexual, 26yo)

3. Physical and verbal violence

3.1. Respondents indicate that homophobic or transphobic physical violence is a serious problem for many community members.

The risk of experiencing physical violence is rated variably – far lower than the risk of experiencing verbal violence. However, study participants agree that the risk of physical attack increases for homosexual men and transgender people.

I as me [would rate the risk at] such a 3/10. I'm not afraid, because I think, „what are they going to do to us?” In the sense of us women, because guys can still beat up a guy for being a fag.

(bisexual woman, 27yo)

I think that being a queer guy you are more afraid of physical violence and a woman of sexual violence. And trans people will be exposed to all forms of violence and discrimination.

(non-binary, pansexual, 26yo)

Some respondents shared their own experiences of physical violence:

We were going home and just walking and over two drunken types attacked [us] to the point that it ended with the police and the hospital. And I had to buy a stun gun. As a prudent person, I took precautions for the future. We absolutely did not expect this. (...) In college it was wearing makeup to university or to work, then different things happened, too, but there was never any physical escalation. And this time it happened. It strongly shook my sense of security. I remember there was a moment where I was a little afraid to leave the house because of this one situation.

(non-binary, 27yo)

3.2. Verbal violence is rated by participants as a phenomenon they encounter more often and in greater intensity.

Higher [risk] than physical violence, because some people are not aware that they are hurting with some comments. Verbal violence can be that „well you're abnormal" or „God decided differently", „that's abnormal, unnatural". And it hurts. And this is much more common, even though an outsider will say that nothing happened, these are just words. Well, but it works on some people.

(homosexual female, 26yo)

Verbal abuse is a daily occurrence for me. Comments like „what the fuck" or „I fuck what this is". For at least one out of five outings I encounter this. I don't worry about it so much anymore, because I know what the comment stems from, I know what attitudes the person saying those words represents, and those are not my attitudes.

(non-binary, 27yo)

3.3. A visible problem related to verbal violence is also the sexualization of same-sex couples, which generally affects female couples.

Due to the fact that we are [LGBT] women, we get a lot of negative comments from men – in their mind positive – that cross boundaries, including sexual ones.

(bisexual female, 26yo)

Comments that „no guy fucked me properly, I don't know what it means, so I prefer women” or some invitation to a threesome, sexualizing this relationship. Since I'm with a woman, maybe we'd like to join a triangle? Such an invalidation of what is different for people, as if it doesn't matter. I think I'm not alone in this, in this sexualization and this invalidation.

(bisexual female, 27yo)

3.4. To reduce the risk of experiencing violence, respondents use various strategies, most often related to avoiding confrontation and not drawing attention to themselves.

Me being a lesbian, [I know] that relatively nothing bad will happen if I don't, as they say, „flaunt myself.” That is, as long as I am a constituent part of society, no one pays attention. But if I were likely to be some kind of activist, it's possible that I would be frowned upon. That's how I see it. And I think that the people who speak out more loudly about it, participate in some marches and it is known about them, they are the ones who get flunked most often.

(homosexual female, 26yo)

The easiest thing to do would be to take such an ole position, let him talk. But not everyone has the mental resilience to not react to a taunt on the street or a comment and respond with something. You

have to accept that victim with your own dignity, that I won't react to being insulted and to the risk that someone might beat me up.

(non-binary, 27yo)

3.5. Survey participants also highlighted police violence they may experience as part of the authorities' actions against LGBTQ+ people.

The police in general are a tool of the system, and if the system is hostile to a certain group of people, the police will be hostile too. This was, for example, those protests in Warsaw two years ago.

(non-binary person, 27yo)

But in addition to these legal things, the police are also a 10/10 in terms of how quickly you can [get them] up to speed. For example, at marches.

(bisexual female, 27yo)

3.6. Respondents believe that the consequences associated with verbal violence and the spread of hatred by political circles and public figures are insufficient and do not bring about real change.

On the one hand there are [tolerant] young people, and on the other hand there is increased hatred and greater acquiescence. (...) The exclusion here is top-down, legal. Through comments from the political media, someone will say something, heckle something. And then „hahahah I was joking,” and that's the end of it. Alternatively, someone has to apologize publicly, writes three sentences and that he shouldn't say that. Even though everyone knows that he said it and writes it because he would have a penalty.

(bisexual female, 26yo)

4. Problems in the area of sex education

Respondents point to the lack of sex education in schools and the lack of adequate preparation of teachers to work with LGBTQ+ youth.

Teachers, first responders, these children, it would be nice if they were educated, so that this education is not ideologically oriented, but rather open.

(non-binary, 27yo)

5. Insecurity, feeling of anxiety

Negative attitudes noticeable in society disrupt the sense of security and translate into feelings of anxiety among non-heteronormative people.

Anxiety. Despite the fact that I have a good situation [in my family in terms of acceptance], how there was such an action one two years ago, when the topic of marches and protests was alive. I realistically was terrified at the time to leave the house. It was the first time I was so realistically scared then. Until then I had the feeling that nothing would ever happen to me. And then I was scared that I would get slapped.

(bisexual female, 26yo)

Anxiety-related emotions inhibit behaviors in some respondents that might reveal their orientation or gender identity. Thus, they give up everyday behaviors that are available to heteronormative couples, such as holding hands.

My partner is afraid to walk by the hand in the city because she has a fear of physical violence.

(bisexual female, 27yo)

6. Difficulties associated with coming out

Coming out is not an action that is taken by LGBTQ+ people once, it occurs every time non-heteronormative people reveal their gender identity or sexual orientation to a new person. Each time, there is an analysis of the potential risks and an assessment of the gains and losses associated with disclosure.

There is the problem of coming out, in the sense of such thoughts, whether it is appropriate to say that you live with a girl, whether you are arranged for an evening with a girl. Normally it is – „well, the boy is coming to pick me up”. And already, for example, „oh, I can't, because I'm going to dinner with my girlfriend”, it's already such a question whether to say it or not, or to avoid this kind of wording. I think very many LGBT people face this, trans people are not even mentioned, no?

(bisexual female, 27yo)

7. Disparagement of LGBTQ+ people and their issues

Respondents note that their problems are sometimes invalidated by the heterosexual majority.

We are constantly told that, after all, we live in a wonderful country, no one beats us, no one threatens us. No one ridicules us or emotionally blackmails us. I think the problem is that people don't realize. They think that if they don't see someone being beaten, it means there is no problem.

(homosexual female, 26yo)

Nullification can also be observed in the area of differential treatment of unions of same-sex couples, including in the family environment.

[In the family] for a long time I felt, and we've been together for 5 years, that it's such a smaller taking of our relationship seriously. I think that through the family it still [wasn't so bad], but with such

random people there is a big problem. That there's such a lack of respect because you're in a same-sex relationship, as if it doesn't matter.

(bisexual female, 27yo)

Changes in the situation of LGBTQ+ people in the last 5 years

Over the past 5 years, the hate narrative led by the Law and Justice government has played a significant role for the situation of LGBTQ+ people. Respondents note that as LGBTQ+ people, they have been considered an enemy that poses a threat to the existing social arrangement.

If there was not a certain piss on TV, it would be better. Because the last 5 years have been 5 years of PIS rule, so from a political angle I also look at it a little bit.

(homosexual female, 26yo)

Violence against LGBT people has become more unpunished. If someone has homophobic views and is verbally violent, and still has acquiescence from a TV or newspaper, it will be easier for them to switch from verbal violence to physical violence. And there is a greater chance that it will be trivialized.

(non-binary, 27yo)

At the same time, respondents unanimously recognize the many positive changes associated with the increased visibility of LGBTQ+ people in social spaces and the media.

They are certainly more visible. Such people tended not to go out, not to show themselves, there was no showing in the media, and if they did, it was in a very negative light, ridiculously. (...) And now there is this more normal, gentle approach. (...) But there is this representation, For example, books are appearing Polish and in Polish translation, television talks about it. On the street these marches or

something, there are more of them, they are in smaller cities, not just some Poznan or Warsaw. These people have started to appear.

(pansexual female, 27yo)

The respondent also attributes an important role to the greater representation of minorities in the culture, which has increased significantly in recent years.

Changes in public consciousness, which are associated with greater openness to rights for non-heteronormative people, also appear to be important.

Even though we as a society are moving forward, what if Poles are ready for marriage equality, how will they not give it to us. In general, this is changing. And from observations outside of surveys, I think it is moving forward. There is still a lot missing, because you hear about these assaults on LGBT people, you see this struggle all the time, at these marches. That these aren't equality parades that are a celebration and now everyone's happy because it's cool, because we have rights, but they're still kind of a struggle.

(bisexual female, 27yo)

Positive changes are also observed in the area of NGO activities:

It seems to me that it has worsened, but there are more organizations that work in favor, they are more resilient and powerful. Equality marches are getting bigger, they are appearing in smaller towns.

(non-binary, 27yo)

What would have to happen for the situation of LGBT+ people to improve?

Respondents emphasize that a breakthrough for improving the situation of LGBTQ+ people would be a change in the government and the narrative led by the authorities.

I think the biggest issue in Poland right now is power. If the authority will not show support such a real one and will not protect the citizens, then the citizens will not protect themselves either. This has to start from the top down. Because from the bottom up it is not happening. (...) As if anything is not done, the authorities consider it deviant, degenerate, some different monstrosities, and as long as it works like this, people will feel a real threat from LGBT people. If people get the kind of propaganda they get all the time, well, it won't change.

(bisexual female, 27yo)

Certainly the ruling party [should change]. Here I won't hide, everyone can see how it is. The ruling party is very much against it, and they just did a witch hunt. I don't know, I think that would change a lot in itself.

(pansexual female, 27yo)

Sex education and psychoeducation is described by respondents as an important element in driving a change in the worldview of those who oppose LGBTQ+ people.

Provide education free of bias and ideology at every stage of education: both in elementary school and in medical and psychological studies, etc.

(non-binary, pansexual, 26yo)

Maybe some psychoeducation of these people, because sometimes the comments are due to ignorance. Ignorance of how a human being develops, what effect hormones have on the fetus. How it all works. Sometimes it happens that someone still does not know that this is no longer considered a pathology. Which is incomprehensible to me, because in the classifications it has already changed.

(bisexual female, 26yo)

In addition to top-down changes that can be made by changing laws and improving education, some respondents stress that a generational change is also needed.

I guess the old generation would have to die out. Some people can't be changed. In the same way, it's these older people who drive it. We also have a mass of young people who are anti, but as a rule they are people living in big families, holding on to old traditions, or people who are looking for a hook.

(pansexual female, 27yo)

Among the most important changes that would improve the situation for LGBTQ+ people are also mentioned:

- 1 Legalization of marriage for same-sex couples;
- 2 Facilitating the transit process; and
- 3 Improving the system of legal protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Allies among political parties

Among the political parties that could become allies of LGBTQ+ people were mentioned: **The Left and the Greens**.

However, no party enjoys full confidence among respondents.

Well, if not the Left, then who? And, on the other hand, there are politicians out there, too, who are making a splash. There's something with everything, because that's how politicians are. I think they also don't know a bit what they are doing. They don't have a good program and plans.

(bisexual female, 27yo)

The Civic Coalition and Poland 2050 arouse ambivalent opinions – it is seen as a better option than Law and Justice, but LGBTQ+ people do not see it as an ally.

My impression is that none [political grouping]. KO is terribly hypocritical in my opinion. I don't sit heavily in politics either, but that's the way it's powdered. Ok, we will allow abortion, BUT. Ok, then we'll introduce civil unions, maybe, but overall it's not clear when, BUT marriages, well maybe not necessarily. And how marriages we will allow, but adoption of children – who saw it. They have terrible limits.

(bisexual female, 27yo)

It seems to me that it would be the Left, I used to say Poland 2050, but Holownia also said something recently that I found that not really. It's difficult in a centrist party, I don't know if KO, maybe so fifty-fifty. Other parties it's not, because you can see it from their program.

(homosexual female, 26yo)

One respondent cites the high instability of opposition parties as a problem:

There was Together, there was the Green Party, there was Spring. These parties are so unstable. So, I think, which party, none, because it changes every year. There is no such thing as PIS, which is always every year and stable. It is known that it will not fall apart. There are parties that I feel are created for the sake of these elections, which are, they work for a year, and then they change and have a different name, a different composition, etc. There is the PO, but in this sphere there is no permanent position.

(bisexual female, 26yo)

NGO activities

Respondents unanimously expressed a positive assessment of the activities of social organizations for the rights of LGBTQ+ people. The following were identified as the most important undertakings: the support provided (especially psychological support, but also housing for people in crisis), involvement in promotion and education about the LGBTQ+ community (publishing books, conducting trainings), and organizing equality parades or cultural events.

They promote a lot, publish books, I don't know how reliable they are, because I haven't read them. (...) They organize marches, but they also organize a lot of psychological and social support. There's this hostel set up in Poznan for LGBT people. There's a support group for parents of transgender children, they do training on various topics such as chemsex. But my impression is that they reach people who are already in the community.

(bisexual female, 26yo)

NGOs do the work that respondents believe the state should do. This activity cannot meet all the needs of LGBTQ+ people.

They are of very high importance. But this is antsy work in a small way. Because how many victims of violence can an association help, and how many can the state help with resources?

(bisexual female, 27yo)

Among the most frequently mentioned organizations were:

- 1 Stonewall Group
- 2 SEXED.PL
- 3 Love Does Not Exclude Association
- 4 Lambda,
- 5 Trans-Fusion
- 6 Campaign Against Homophobia

Another problem seems to be the range of activities of social organizations, which are mainly based in large cities. For this reason, residents of smaller towns may not experience as much support from organizations as people in large cities.

I don't have that much exposure, because I admit that I don't live in a big city. (...) And in my city, apart from one march once a year, there is absolutely nothing happening related to LGBT people. (...) They [organizations] typically are, if you live in Poznan, Wroclaw, Warsaw. Or around the big cities, they are there. But just go to some

smaller city and focused on the surrounding villages, there is simply nothing.

(pansexual female, 27yo)

LGBTQ+ rights and democratic development

Some respondents had difficulty answering the question of whether the rights of LGBTQ+ people have an impact on the development of democracy. The link was not clear to them. However, most acknowledged that the rights given to minorities have a positive impact on democracy-related processes.

In general, for me, the more rights for people like abortion, marriage, adoption of children, in vitro that allow you to make a choice over your own life, it will always be for the better and good for democracy.

(bisexual female, 27yo)

Of course. Protecting the rights of minorities from harm from the majority is a huge challenge for democracy, but it is also the only way to build a fairer, more equal and healthier society for all.

(non-binary, pansexual person, 26yo)

In contrast, Poland, as a country that refuses to respect sexual and reproductive rights, has been recognized as an increasingly less democratic state.

Yes, Poland is becoming less democratic. I feel that people are not being listened to. There was a women's strike. How many people there took to the streets. So what? Where demonstrations, demonstrations, etc. are a tool of society in a democracy. A tool to influence power. Well, and you can just see what a powerful tool of influence it is. It hasn't changed anything, where in theory it should. Strong grassroots pressure should influence the top, and it doesn't. This democracy is shaken. Likewise with LGBT.

(bisexual female, 27yo)

Poland is not democratic at all at this point, and if it takes away rights or doesn't give them, all the more so, because people don't want to get involved in politics. Without a majority of people voting, there will be no democracy, and for now the groups that vote are those that are privileged, so we can't talk about democracy.

(homosexual female, 26yo)

The future of LGBTQ+ people in poland

Respondents most often describe their attitude toward the future of LGBTQ+ people in Poland as ambivalent.

The thought of what might change in a few years' time arouses negative emotions in them, mostly associated with sadness. Also evident is concern that the situation in Poland may remain unchanged for a long time.

A bit sad, because I see it blackly. I don't think it's worse, but it seems to me that there's still a long way to go, if any, for people to come to terms with walking, living and being normal. Let alone to marry or adopt children. The best thing to do here so far is to be quiet, and if you're loud, you have to have an ass like a battering ram and a steel back.

(pansexual female, 27yo)

However, there is also hope for an improvement in the situation, which is linked to a change in power or the effect of activist actions.

Mixed. As I think about how hopeless it is and all, there are these positives, but they are against a black background. Rather sad, because I have so that it will be hard for me to live to be perfect, I will not even live to see it for sure. And sometimes I'm so hopeful that, all in all, the wedding maybe when they're 60 or something, and sometimes I hope that maybe in this next election something will change and somehow push through or something.

(bisexual female, 26yo)

I have zero faith in this country , politicians and party. no more hope that something top-down will change. I still have some faith in people and some organizations, because I see how person by person, and project by project, they help people and build healthier and safer communities.

(non-binary, pansexual, 26yo)

Once again, one can also see distrust of the actions of the authorities, including the opposition, in granting rights to non-heteronormative people.

If the government were to change, I think they would give some rights to LGBT people. And I think there would be a super fuss too. Even if there were civil unions instead of marriages and there would be confusion. There would be marriages, there would be confusion too, because there would be no adoptions. It was already the case that Poland is not ready for marriages, let's give civil unions and there was already such a narrative, whether it's not such a facade. And I'm afraid that if there are any changes, there will be a very big concern. Isn't it a facade, isn't it going to perpetuate, isn't it „we'll get something – they'll take something away from us.”

(bisexual female, 27yo)

SUMMARY

- 1 Respondents rate their overall living situation fairly well. It is „good” for 43% of respondents, „neither good nor bad” – also for 43%, and „bad” for only 11%.
- 2 In the case of women, the worst assessments of their situation are given by the oldest people (over 60 – 16%), those with primary and vocational education (17%), and complete non-believers (19%).
- 3 Among LGBTQ+ people in practically every social category, rather positive assessments of their overall living situation prevail – a good rating is given in this case by as many as 64% of respondents.
- 4 Respondents are pessimistic about their living situation in the near future – 26% of them believe they will be „worse.” The figure for women is 28%, while for the LGBTQ+ community, it is 21%. Among women, those over 45 years old (36–38%), rather left-leaning (38%), and with higher education (35%) see the worst future. In the LGBTQ+ community, women (33%) and those living in towns with 20,000 to 49,000 residents (42%) see the worst future.
- 5 Both groups, women and LGBTQ+, however, see a clear deterioration in living conditions in Poland over the past five years. 76% of respondents agreed with this statement, with only 15% indicating that the situation has „rather” or „definitely” improved. The greatest deterioration is perceived by women with leftist views (a total of 92% of indications). For LGBTQ+ people, the view of „deterioration of living conditions in Poland” is shared by even more respondents – 85%.
- 6 According to 69% of respondents, the situation in the country is heading in the wrong direction. The opposite view is held by 8% of respondents. 65% of women and 83% of people from the LGBTQ+ community agree. More opponents of this claim are found only among women who consider their views

right-wing (25% believe that the situation in the country is heading in the right direction) and are firm believers (30%).

- 7 Also, 69% of respondents believe that the political situation in the country is heading in the wrong direction. The opposite view is held by 9%. The political situation in the country is assessed most poorly by college-educated women (76%) with leftist and centrist views (77%–76%). Virtually all LGBTQ+ people rate the political situation in the country negatively.
- 8 In the opinion of those surveyed, there is also little possibility of improving this situation. 41% of respondents are convinced that it will „get worse.” Regarding the fact that it will remain unchanged, 23% believe and hope for improvement is seen by 12% of respondents.
- 9 According to 59% of respondents, the country’s economic situation is bad (27% – neither good nor bad, 9% – good). The economic situation is rated worse by LGBTQ+ people than heterosexual women (85% to 55%). On the other hand, it is again best rated by right-wing (27%) and deeply religious (30%), with negative assessments outweighing positive ones in these cases as well.
- 10 According to those surveyed, the economic situation will worsen over the next year – 55% of respondents believe so (50% of women and 82% of LGBTQ+ people).
- 11 According to 52% of respondents, democracy is the best form of government. However, 22% believe that, in some cases, non-democratic principles are more favorable than democratic ones. For 20% of respondents, whether the government is democratic or not is irrelevant. Only 5% of respondents categorically believe that democracy is a bad form of government.
- 12 Among women, the highest number of supporters of democracy is among those with higher education (61%), left-wing (67%) or centrist views (59%), deep believers (57%), but also total non-believers (57%). Positive attitudes toward democracy also increase with the size of the place of residence of the women surveyed, as well as with age and education.

- 13 Among LGBTQ+ people, positive attitudes toward democracy predominate. Unfortunately, the sample size does not allow generalizing conclusions about the views of individual categories within this social group.
- 14 The results show that 39% of women feel safe in Poland, and 36% have no clear opinion. In comparison, a sense of insecurity impacts 25%.
- 15 The results differed when we asked about pregnant women's sense of security. As many as 55% of respondents believe that the sense of security of pregnant women has deteriorated over the past five years. The opposite view is held by 19% of respondents, while 26% felt nothing had changed.
- 16 Looking ahead, 26% of respondents believe that the situation for pregnant women will worsen over the next year – 41% believe that nothing will change in this situation. Only 16% believe that the situation for pregnant women will improve.
- 17 48% of respondents strongly negatively assessed the October 2020 Constitutional Court ruling, which significantly restricted the right to perform legal abortions. Another 19% of respondents evaluated this judgment „rather negatively.” One in five respondents had no opinion on the matter. 14% of respondents spoke positively about the Court's ruling.
- 18 According to 22% of respondents, the Court's judgment influenced their reproductive decisions to plan not to have a child. For 50% – these plans have not changed – these women are still planning to have a child, despite the verdict. Plans also did not change for 26% of women who said that, regardless of the socio-political situation, they did not want to plan to have children.
- 19 According to 44% of respondents, access to gynecological and obstetric care has worsened over the past five years. According to 40%, nothing has changed in this regard. Only 16% believe there has been an improvement in the care area.
- 20 Access to infertility treatment (including IVF) has also worsened, according to 47% of respondents, with 36% indicating no change and 17% believing that access to infertility treatment has improved.

- 21 In the respondents' opinions, access to contraception has also worsened – 47% of respondents agreed with this statement, with 37% believing that nothing has changed and 16% believing that the situation in this area has improved.
- 22 Respondents were also asked to evaluate the actions of selected political parties in favor of women's rights. The Law and Justice Party was rated most negatively (57% negative), followed by the Confederation (36%), the PSL (23%), the Left Party (21%), and the Civic Platform (21%).
- 23 Opinions on the sense of security among LGBTQ+ people are divided: 38% of respondents do not feel safe in Poland, while 37% have the opposite opinion; 25% feel neither safe nor unsafe.
- 24 Respondents note a worsening sense of security over the past five years. As many as 63% of respondents agree with this statement. According to 14%, nothing has changed, while 23% believe it is safer in Poland.
- 25 One in four respondents believes that the coming year will bring another deterioration. According to 46%, nothing will change in this regard, while 15% believe that the sense of security of the LGBTQ+ community will improve.
- 26 89% of respondents have not experienced physical violence due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. The results differ when asked about the personal experience of verbal violence. In this case, 41% of respondents agreed that they had been victims of this type of violence.
- 27 30% of respondents confirmed that they had witnessed physical violence against LGBTQ+ people, and 83% said they had witnessed hate speech against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- 28 The spaces in which respondents encountered the experience of physical violence were primarily social media and the Internet (68%), traditional media (52%), public places (39%), public institutions (21%), and private spaces (9%). 25% of respondents had not encountered physical violence at all in the past year.
- 29 The places where verbal violence against LGBTQ+ people occurs are primarily social media and the Internet – 86% of respondents believe so. Further

mentioned are traditional media (77%), public spaces (61%), public institutions (38%), and private places (16%).

30 According to respondents, the following changes should be implemented in Poland:

- Access to reliable sex education in schools – 88% very important
- Introduction of civil unions in Poland – 72% very important
- Introduction of same-sex marriages in Poland – 58% very important
- Enabling adoption of a child of a partner in a same-sex relationship – 58% very important
- Use of inclusive language by institutions and offices – 52% very important
- Enabling insemination with donor sperm/in vitro fertilization for same-sex couples – 50% very important
- Changing the gender designation in documents to include non-binary people – 50% very important
- Enabling adoption of children by same-sex couples – 40% very important
- Introducing gender-neutral restrooms and locker rooms in public places – 34% very important

31 LGBTQ+ people surveyed were also asked to rate the actions of selected political parties in favor of LGBTQ+ rights. Law and Justice was rated most negatively (97% negative), followed by the Confederation (93%), PSL (55%), Civic Platform (40% each), and the Left (6%).

32 Gender discrimination in Poland is still a current phenomenon that can be observed on many levels – the most important problems seem to be:

- Gender wage discrimination;
- Discrimination in the labor market – access to work and particular professions;
- „Invisible work” of women in the area of household duties and shared child-care;
- Physical and verbal violence against women;
- Menstrual poverty; and
- Restriction of reproductive rights.

- 33 Those living in poverty and away from large cities experience greater problems with access to reliable gynecological and obstetric care, and thus contraception (including emergency contraception), as well as menstrual hygiene supplies.
- 34 Discrimination against women in the labor market, which can be seen in many different areas – from wage discrimination through the reluctance of employers to hire women of childbearing age – remains significant. One of the reasons for this is the stereotypes present in the mindset referring to traditional gender roles, which promote the belittling of women’s competence and the rejection of their job applications.
- 35 The Constitutional Court’s ruling has significantly affected the social situation of women. Particular attention has been paid to the deteriorating psychological well-being and lower sense of security associated with planning a pregnancy and starting a family. Also associated with the verdict is a negative attitude toward the currently ruling government.
- 36 There is a noticeable lack of confidence in political parties to pursue an electoral agenda that would advance the fight for women’s rights. Participants were very cautious in assessing which party could act as an ally. Among the parties mentioned, left-wing and centrist groups dominated.
- 37 More trust is placed in social organizations, respondents rated the activities of foundations and associations in an unambiguously positive way, and their work was described as definitely needed and a substitute for the care that should be provided by the state.
- 38 Changing the situation in Poland and improving the situation of women seems to be possible provided that politicians and the government work together with grassroots activists. The change is seen as a long-term process that can be initiated by a change in government, existing laws and equality education.
- 39 Attitudes toward the future of women in Poland are associated with a number of fears and anxieties about further negative changes that may be introduced – especially further restrictions on reproductive rights. However, at the same time, hope for improvement is evident in the participants’ narratives, from which motivation for further action is drawn.

- 40 The overall assessment of the social situation of LGBTQ+ people living in Poland is rather negative. Non-heteronormative people are still fighting a battle to gain the rights to marry, adopt children and have better access to transit.
- 41 Respondents point to the negative role played by the current ruling party, which has a hand in spreading hatred and actively discriminating against LGBTQ+ people, using the discussion of minority rights as a tool in the political struggle.
- 42 At the same time, in recent years there have been positive developments regarding the visibility and increasing representation of non-heteronormative people, both in the media, culture and public life, as well as „on the streets.”
- 43 There is also a noticeable increase in openness and acceptance, especially among young people and young adults.
- 44 Among the biggest difficulties faced by LGBTQ+ people are:
- Lack of adequate legal solutions related to legalizing marriages and having children
 - Obstacles to the transit process and the medicalization of transit
 - Physical and verbal violence
 - Problems in the area of sex education
 - Insecurity, feeling of anxiety
 - Difficulties associated with coming out
 - The disempowerment of LGBTQ+ people and their issues
- 45 The issue of homophobic and transphobic physical and verbal violence appears to be a particularly significant problem, affecting LGBTQ+ people’s sense of security. Respondents rated the risk of experiencing violence as high, especially in the case of verbal violence.
- 46 According to survey participants, homosexual men and transgender people are more likely to experience physical violence, while homosexual and bisexual women are more likely to experience verbal violence related to their sexualization.

- 47 There is a clear distrust of politicians, including from opposition groups. A possible ally for LGBTQ+ people seems to be the Left.
- 48 The activity of NGOs is assessed unequivocally positively. Associations and foundations support non-heteronormative people in a wide range, which includes, among others: psychological support, housing, promotion, education, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, organization of cultural events.
- 49 Attitudes toward the future of the LGBTQ+ community in Poland are ambivalent. Emotions of sadness and fear dominate. Respondents do not expect significant changes in the law or the mentality of the heteronormative majority. They do, however, pin their hopes on an improvement in the situation if there were a change in government and as a result of social organizations and activists.

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ORGANISATIONS

ENoP – The European Network of Political Foundation serves as an umbrella network and information hub on topics related to democracy and development cooperation. As such, it provides its members a joint platform to engage into a coordinated dialogue with EU institutions, CSOs and other relevant stakeholders.

ENoP brings together 53 political foundations from 23 European countries, active in Europe and with over 130 local offices in partner countries. Although independent in nature, each of the ENoP members is affiliated with one of six political groups represented in the European Parliament (ECR, EPP, Greens/EFA, The Left in the European Parliament, S&D, Renew Europe). This broad spectrum of affiliation reflects the political diversity of the European democratic landscape and gives ENoP a unique approach.

Projekt: Polska are people who are dreaming of a modern, open, and liberal Poland. Those, to whom a democratic, effective and citizen-friendly government is a key goal, and who help accomplish this goal while enjoying themselves, forming new friendships, and furthering their own interests. The Projekt: Polska Foundation is our framework, a group of professionals with immense experience in direct action: entrepreneurs, leading ngo heads, civil servants.

SOURCES OF PHOTOS

- p. 1 Equality Parade, 2019, Warsaw, Poland. Photo by Konrad Skotnicki, Max Zieliński / Greenpeace Polska. Flickr
- p. 11 Black protest of initiative Save the Women, 2016.10.01. Wikimedia Commons
- p. 23 Equality Parade, 2019, Warsaw, Poland. Photo by Konrad Skotnicki, Max Zieliński / Greenpeace Polska. Flickr
- p. 38 Situation at the Poland-Belarus border. Updated album. Prime Minister's Office. Flickr
- p. 56 Bilingual polish-german village boundary Izbicko/Stubendorf, Upper Silesia, 2013. Photo by Marcin Szala. Wikipedia
- p. 72 Protestors attend a demonstration to demand justice for the death of Eleazar García at the Gate of the Sun. Madrid Spain, 2021.03.27. Photo by Aldara Zarraoa. Shutterstock
- p. 88 Synagogue in Dąbrowa Tarnowska, Poland. Photo by Mariusz Cieszewski. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. Flickr
- p. 104 Photo by Sushil Nash, 2020. Unsplash

The actions of the Law and Justice and Fidesz are textbook examples of treating minorities like an object to achieve current political goals. The unprecedented attack on migrants and refugees has served right-wing populists in Warsaw and Budapest to seize and consolidate power. When they realised that the division of society into ‘us and them’ and the ruthless assault on ‘them’ was bringing notable benefits, they invented more groups to become victims of the witch-hunt by the party and the state.



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