



**ZOIS**

Zentrum für Osteuropa-  
und internationale Studien  
*Centre for East European  
and International Studies*

No. 4/2019 · September 2019

# ZOIS REPORT

**YOUTH IN POLAND:  
OUTLOOK ON LIFE AND  
POLITICAL ATTITUDES**

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## Executive summary

Today's young people in Central and Eastern Europe are the first cohort without direct experience of the socialist system. For those in Poland, the opportunities of the free market, free movement within the European Union (EU), and democratic standards have become the norm. A ZOiS survey conducted in February 2019 provides insights into the political attitudes of young Poles, their political engagement, and their views on and experiences with other countries in the run-up to two important elections: the parliamentary vote on 13 October 2019 and the presidential election due by May 2020 at the latest. The main findings are as follows:

- Although only a little more than one-third of respondents state that they were interested in politics, 75 per cent indicate that they want to participate in the parliamentary election. Of these, around one-third remain undecided about whom to vote for.

- Young people in Poland are very aware of recent protests: over 90 per cent know of them, and nearly 11 per cent say they had participated in political or social protests over the last twelve months.
- Trust in political and public institutions varies considerably: among the younger generation, trust in the media is particularly low; the parliament and the president received mixed scores, while NGOs, the army, and the police attained the highest trust values.
- Trust in the church is remarkably low. The proportion of young people who self-identify as religious is below that of the general population, however, young people attend church with a similar frequency to the broader population.
- Social media are the main source young people use to gain political information, with Facebook the most prominent outlet. Social media use is also highly politicised, with nearly one-quarter of Facebook users reporting having unfriended someone because of political disputes.
- Expectations of the government centre on economic issues, but young people also frequently mention political priorities and maintaining democratic standards as the key concerns for the government.
- With regard to Poland's foreign policy, young people prioritise a closer relationship with the United States (US), mentioned by one-third of respondents. Young Poles also named other European countries, most prominently Germany, the United Kingdom, and Hungary. Taken together, EU countries are nearly as important for the younger generation as the US is.
- Attitudes towards the EU tend to be positive: nearly 80 per cent of respondents believed that it was right for Poland to join the EU in 2004. A positive view of the idea of Europe contrasts with starkly negative associations with Russia.
- Young Poles have extensive travel and work experiences in other regions of Poland and other EU countries. Mobility beyond the EU is limited, including to the US and countries of the former Soviet Union, such as Ukraine and Russia.
- Nearly half of the respondents indicate that they would like to leave their place of residence. In terms of preferred destinations, around one-quarter of respondents mention EU countries, and around 15 per cent say they would like to go to the US.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Cities included in the survey**



Source: ZOiS

## Introduction

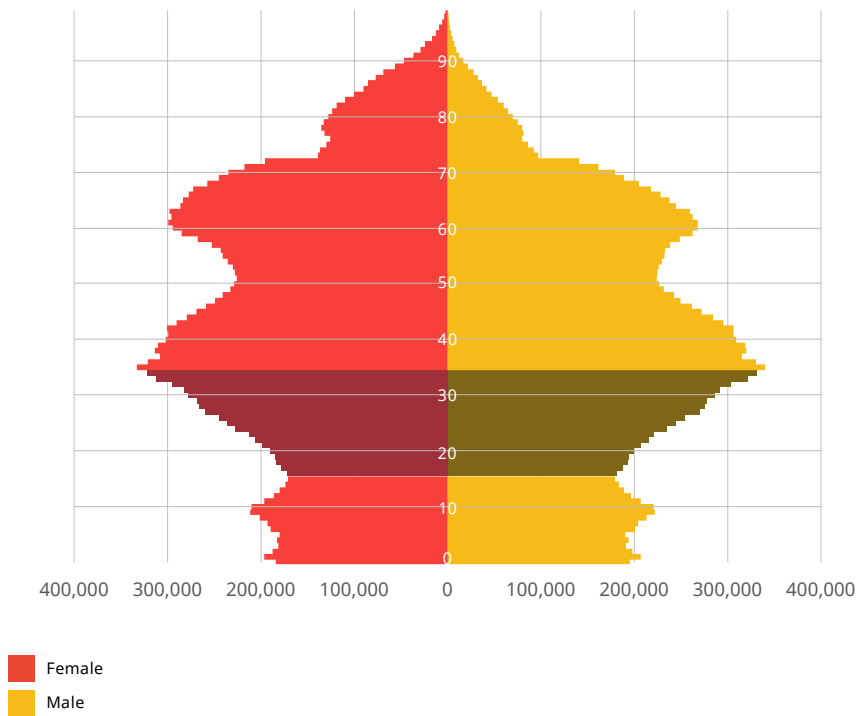
Today's young people in Central and Eastern Europe are the first cohort without direct experience of the socialist system. For those in Poland, the opportunities of the free market, free movement within the EU, and democratic standards have become the norm. Thousands of young Poles regularly take to the streets, not only to demand higher wages and improved working conditions for doctors or teachers, but also to protest against the judicial reforms that the governing Law and Justice (PiS) party undertook in 2017. At the same time, more Polish youth than expected voted for PiS in local elections in 2018.

As Poland prepares for a parliamentary election on 13 October 2019 and a presidential vote by May 2020, what are the political views and preferences of the country's younger generation? And how do they compare with those of the overall population?

This report presents the results of a ZOiS survey carried out in cooperation with R-Research between 15 and 27 February 2019 among 2,000 respondents across Poland.<sup>1</sup> We surveyed people aged 16–34 living in the major urban areas. Respondents came from the following cities, in numbers proportional to the cities' population sizes ► **FIGURE 1:**

<sup>1</sup> The author gratefully acknowledges the research assistance provided by Nadja Sieffert.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Population by sex and age in 2018**



Source: ZOiS

- Warsaw, with a population of more than 1 million;
- Kraków, Łódź, Poznań, and Wrocław, with populations of between 500,000 and 1 million; and
- Białystok, Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Katowice, Lublin, and Szczecin, with populations of between 250,000 and 500,000.

We extended the survey to young respondents living in cities with between 100,000 and 250,000 inhabitants. In addition to quotas for place of residence, we fixed quotas for gender and age, to mirror the demographic structure of that section of the population. Overall, Poles in the age cohort surveyed here represent a little more than 9 million people, from a total population of 38 million. ► **FIGURE 2**

The survey was conducted online, a format that was chosen as it fitted the communication practices of the younger generation, gave respondents control over the process, conveyed greater anonymity than face-to-face interviews, and thereby limited social desirability bias — the psychological tendency of interviewees to adjust to the interviewers' real or perceived expectations.

## Living conditions, education, and income

Roughly one-third of respondents indicated that they were single. The remainder was split between those who were married — around one-quarter — and those who were cohabiting — 40 per cent. Older respondents and those with children were more likely to live with a partner. Around one-third of the sample had children, primarily those older than 25 and those who were religious. Respondents with children also tended to have a lower level of education.

Asked about their professional activities in the week before the survey, around 60 per cent of respondents indicated that they were working full time. Five per cent stated that they were unemployed, a figure that corresponds to the country-wide unemployment rate but is below the official youth unemployment rate (for those under 28) of 10 per cent.<sup>2</sup> Unemployment was higher among younger male respondents.

Fourteen per cent of those questioned were studying, and 7 per cent said they looked after their family. ► **FIGURE 3** Forty-four per cent of the sample had completed higher education, and around 37 per cent had finished secondary education. ► **FIGURE 4** The better educated attended church more frequently, were more likely to live in Warsaw, and were less likely to have children.

A little more than half of the young people described the material position of their household as one in which they could afford at least household appliances. Yet nearly 28 per cent stated they had enough money for clothing and shoes but not enough to buy a large household appliance. On a seven-point scale of the economic self-perception, with one being the lowest value, the average value was 4.59. ► **FIGURE 5** Younger Poles, those who still lived with their parents, those who lived in larger cities, and the better educated had the highest perceptions of the financial situation of their households.

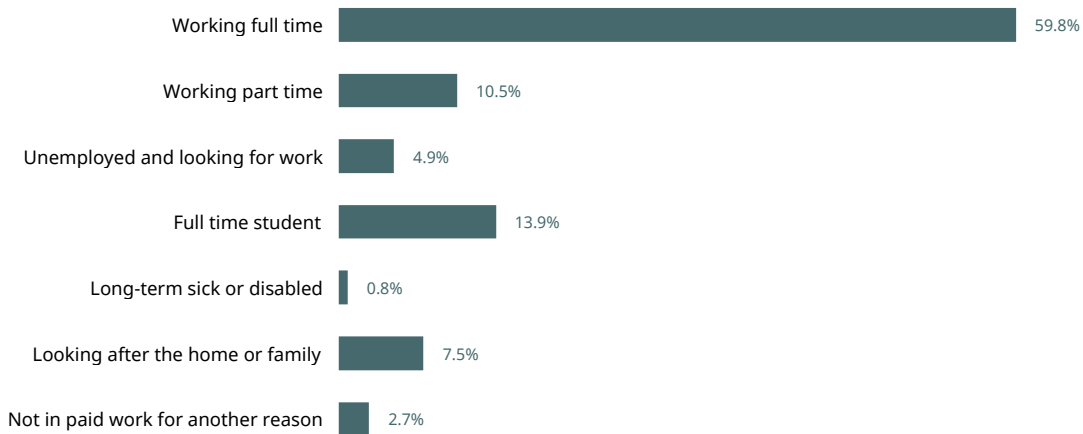
## Religion

Religion has increasingly become a widely discussed dividing factor in Polish society and politics, and the debate has gained in intensity since early 2019. In late 2018, the critical film *Clergy* by the director Wojciech Smarzowski had huge success across the country. But the momentary culmination of the debate was the release of the film *Tell No One* on YouTube only in May 2019. The documentary about child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in Poland was viewed by more than 11 million within three days of its release, leading to controversial discussions about the issue.

Such controversies have left a visible imprint on what young people make of the church, and this issue is of particular political importance in Poland. There is close proximity between representatives of the church and local politicians from the governing PiS party and, more broadly, an alliance

<sup>2</sup> 'Poland Youth Unemployment Rate', Trading Economics, <https://tradingeconomics.com/poland/youth-unemployment-rate>.

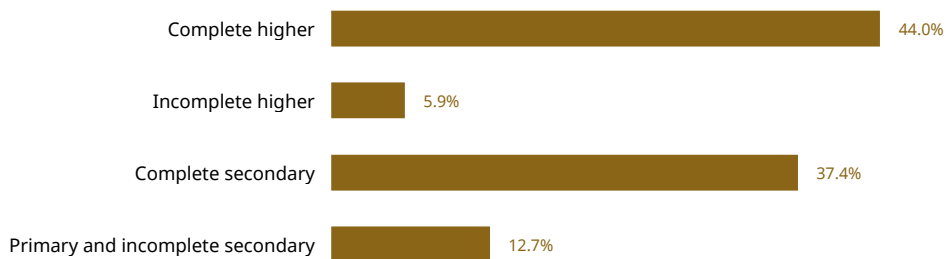
**FIGURE 3**  
**Employment status** (as of last week)



n = 1,871

Source: ZOiS

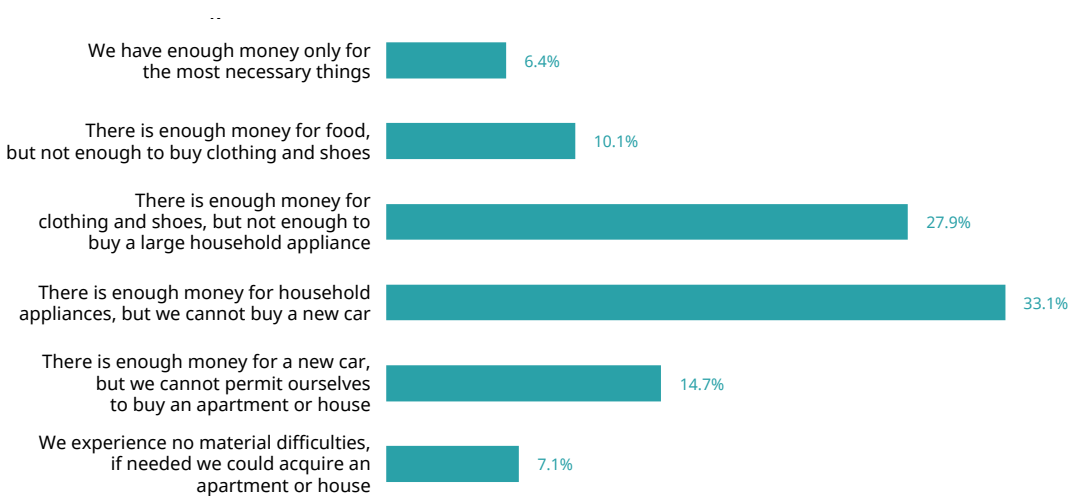
**FIGURE 4**  
**Education**



n = 2,002

Source: ZOiS

**FIGURE 5**  
**Self-reported household wealth**



n = 1,855

Source: ZOiS

between the Catholic Church and those holding the country's political power. Meanwhile, the Polish church is also a politicised actor that is actively involved in political and societal debates, for example through the radio station Radio Maryja.

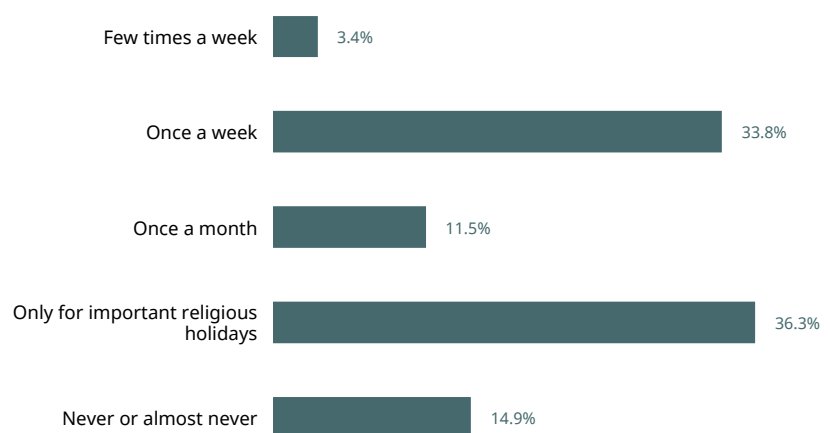
A little over 70 per cent of the survey respondents indicated that they were Roman Catholic, and around 20 per cent said they followed no religion. Of Poles in general, 88 per cent declared an affiliation with the Catholic Church according to the 2017 European Values Study, showing that the level of self-declared church affiliation is lower among young Poles than in the overall population.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond whether people self-identify as religious, an important question is what that religious identity means for young people. We therefore asked those respondents who indicated a religious affiliation how frequently they visited their respective places of worship. ► **FIGURE 6** The data show a noteworthy split among the young generation between those who visit church once a week or more (37 per cent) and those who worship on important holidays, if at all (51 per cent). By comparison, around 37 per cent of Poland's overall population usually attends weekly mass,<sup>4</sup> suggesting little variation across the generations. Therefore, despite the fact that fewer young people self-identify as Catholic than in the wider population, this does not translate into a difference in regularity of worship.

Our data also point to a further distinction by age. The youngest respondents — those up to around 25 years of age — tend to go to church more frequently, which might in part reflect the fact that they are more likely to live with their parents and attend church with them.

**FIGURE 6**

**How often do you visit your place of worship?**



n = 1,431

Source: ZOIS

3 EVS (2018): European Values Study 2017: Integrated Dataset (EVS 2017). GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7500 Data file Version 1.0.0, doi:10.4232/1.13090

4 'Poland: Church Statistics for 2016', Zenit, 4 January 2018, <https://zenit.org/articles/poland-church-statistics-for-2016/>.



## Political interest and engagement

### Political interest and knowledge: young people worlds apart?

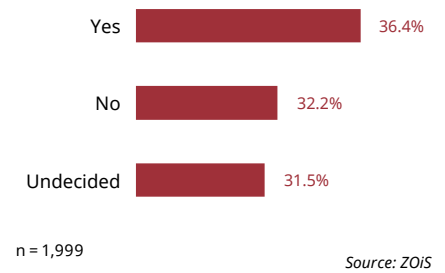
Asked whether they were interested in politics, a little more than one-third of the survey respondents stated that they were, with the remaining two-thirds saying either that they had no interest or that they did not know.<sup>5</sup>

► **FIGURE 7** Of those interested in politics or undecided, the vast majority expressed an interest in both international and domestic politics (72 per cent); around 19 per cent were primarily interested in the latter and 9 per cent in the former.

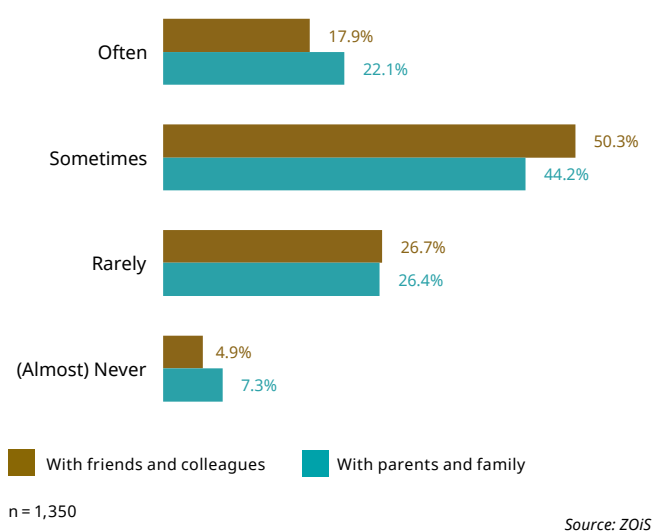
Young people tend to discuss politics slightly more often with family members than with friends or colleagues: 22 per cent said they did so often with family members, whereas 18 per cent said the same for friends and colleagues. ► **FIGURE 8** Among the latter, there is, however, more political disagreement. ► **FIGURE 9** Around two-thirds stated that they sometimes or often disagreed with friends and colleagues, and 56 per cent with members of their family. This suggests there is room for political disagreement not only in the public but also in the private realm. Older Poles and those with higher household incomes are more involved in political discussions and have more disagreements. A high frequency of political discussions correlates with a significantly higher knowledge of protests.

Our survey included a set of picture quizzes and factual questions aimed at understanding the political and historical knowledge of the younger generation. Respondents could acquire a total of ten points, which only 1.3 per

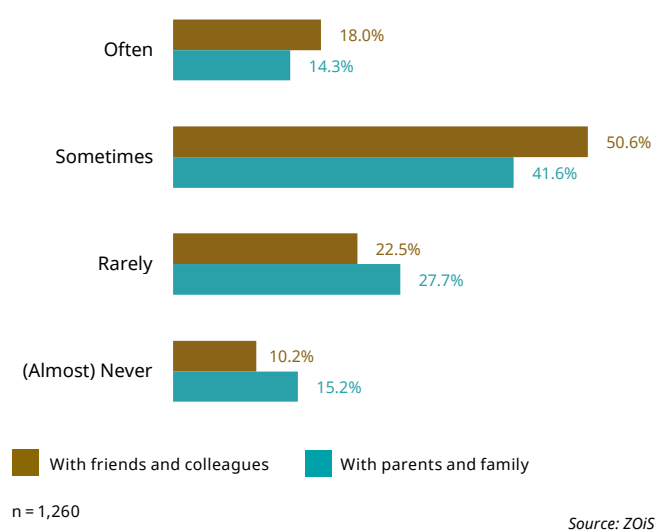
**FIGURE 7**  
**Are you interested in politics?**



**FIGURE 8**  
**Frequency of political discussions**



**FIGURE 9**  
**When you discuss politics, how often do you disagree?**



5 This value is below the 45 per cent of the general population who stated they were at least somewhat interested, according to the 2017 European Values Study, EVS (2018): European Values Study 2017: Integrated Dataset (EVS 2017). GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7500 Data file Version 1.0.0, doi:10.4232/1.13090

cent of them managed to do. Nearly half of the respondents scored five or six points. While almost all could correctly identify German chancellor Angela Merkel and US president Donald Trump, fewer than half recognised Poland's deputy prime minister Beata Szydło and less than one-quarter could identify Ukraine's then president Petro Poroshenko.

Around half of those surveyed correctly said the EU comprised 28 countries, whereas one-quarter thought the EU was smaller than it is. Women's quiz scores were significantly higher than men's; education and household income also positively correlated with political and historical knowledge.

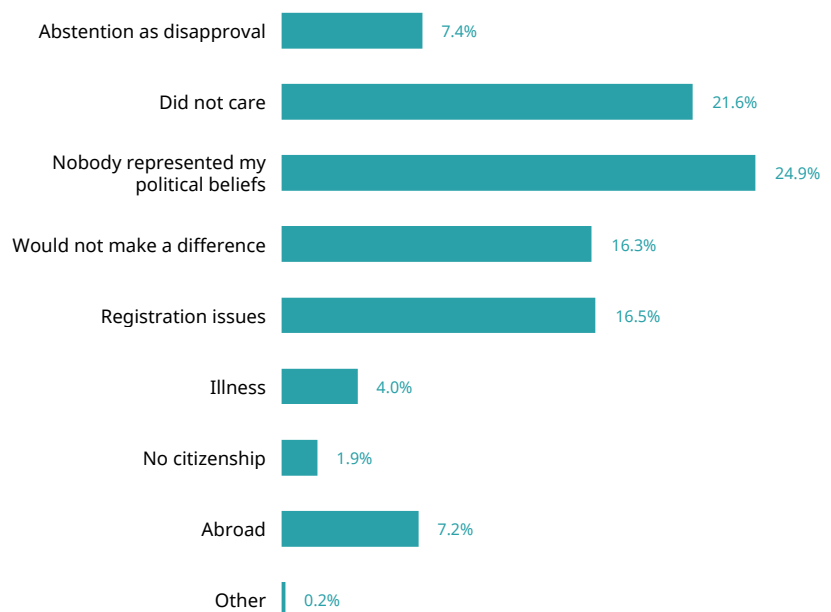
### Formal politics: voting behaviour

The Polish local elections in October and November 2018 made headlines. The governing PiS party increased its support by 7 percentage points compared with the 2014 elections to 34 per cent, due in part to the support of young voters. In our sample, 64.5 per cent stated that they had voted in the local elections, markedly above the record high turnout of 55 per cent for the first round of the elections among the general population. Of those respondents who did not vote, when asked why not, around a quarter said nobody represented their political beliefs. Slightly less that they did not care, and around 16 per cent believed their vote would not make a difference or cited problems with registration, usually due to having recently moved. ► **FIGURE 10**

In October 2019, both houses of parliament, the Sejm and the Senate, will have to be re-elected. Asked in February 2019 whether they would vote in those elections, 75 per cent of young people confirmed their intention to

**FIGURE 10**

#### Reason for not voting in local elections 2018



n = 570

Source: ZOiS

participate, while 20 per cent were undecided. The May 2019 European Parliament elections have been discussed as potentially providing an indication of the direction the Polish electorate might take in the parliamentary election. The European elections saw a noteworthy rise in turnout, from 24 per cent in 2014 to 46 per cent in 2019. Support for former prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński's conservative PiS increased the party's vote share to 45.4 per cent, a greater increase than expected in the polls. The oppositional European Coalition, a newly established alliance of five opposition parties including the liberal-conservative Civic Platform (PO), the Polish People's Party, and .Modern, came second with 38.5 per cent.

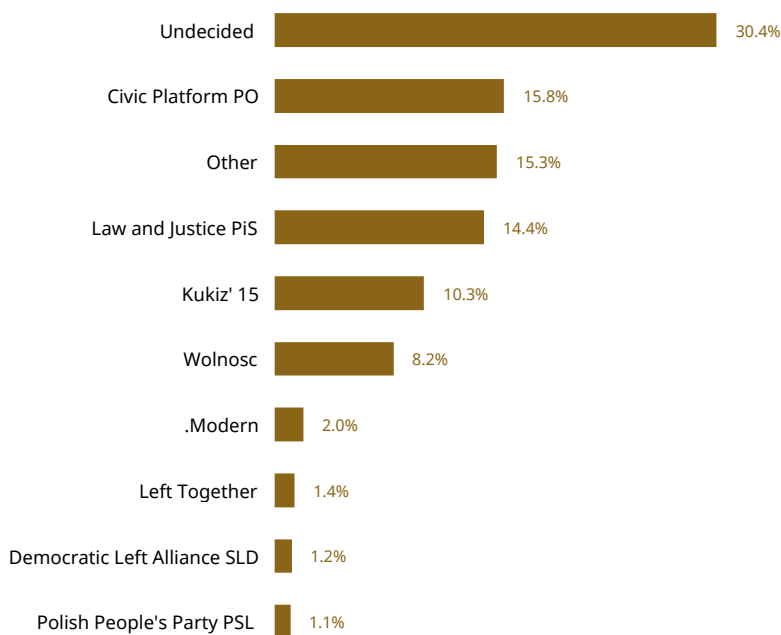
Our survey was undertaken in February, and while voting intentions at the start of the year cannot predict actual turnout in a parliamentary election in the autumn, the picture of voting intentions is nevertheless remarkable.

► **FIGURE 11** Around one-third of respondents were undecided about whom to vote for, followed by a very narrow divide between PO and PiS. Ten per cent opted for the movement Kukiz'15, which is led by rock musician Paweł Kukiz and specifically targets young people. This is slightly higher than the scores Kukiz'15 has attained in population-wide election forecasts. The support for both PO and PiS, by contrast, is significantly lower among young people than in the broader population, where PiS scored around 40 per cent and PO about 25 per cent at the time of the survey.

**Support for PO and PiS is lower among young people.**

Fifteen per cent in our sample said they would vote for 'other parties', which are likely to include the social-democratic Wiosna, founded at the time of the survey and potentially appealing to young people. Led by the former mayor of Słupsk and LGBT activist Robert Biedroń, the party won three seats in May's European Parliament elections. The voting intentions of young Poles,

**FIGURE 11**  
**Intended vote choice in parliamentary elections 2019**



n = 1,393

Source: ZOiS

certainly in spring 2019, seemed more dispersed than those of the general population and are likely to shift significantly until election day.

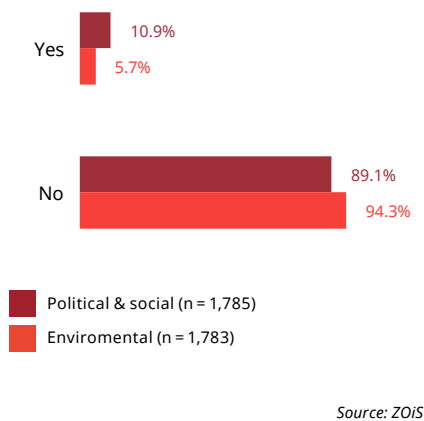
### Informal politics: protest knowledge and participation

A further set of questions evaluated young people’s views on protests. Forty-eight per cent of the respondents considered protests a legitimate form of political engagement. Moreover, a remarkable 92 per cent knew about protests that had taken place in the country. Asked what kind of protests these were, respondents gave very diverse answers. These included strikes and protests relating to working conditions and salaries in the education and healthcare sectors, demonstrations over an abortion ban proposed in March 2018, and protests against judicial reforms.

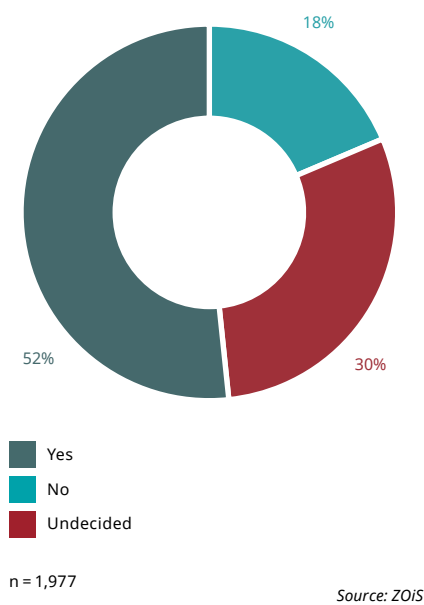
Of those who knew about the protests, nearly 11 per cent said they had participated in political and/or social protests. ▶ FIGURE 12 Eighty per cent of those had participated in protests in their hometowns, most frequently Warsaw, Kraków, Wrocław, or Gdańsk, but also in the smaller cities with populations of less than 250,000. Those who had participated in protests in other cities than their place of residence primarily went to Warsaw.

A little less than 6 per cent of those who knew about the protests had participated in environmental demonstrations. Of those, 70 per cent said the protests had taken place in their hometowns. The remaining 30 per cent went to other cities, again primarily Warsaw, to participate.

**FIGURE 12**  
**Participation in protest**



**FIGURE 13**  
**Should the government get young people into official youth organisations?**



### Political youth organisations: yes in principle

Organisations specifically aimed at mobilising young people have been a critical component of youth politics across some Central and Eastern European countries. In Poland, 87 per cent of young people think that youth should join specific political youth organisations to make their voices heard. Moreover, 52 per cent said that the government should seek to involve young people in official youth organisations. ▶ FIGURE 13 These two values may be surprisingly high given the low actual membership in youth organisations.

Asked whether they were members of such organisations, only 5.4 per cent affirmed that they were actively involved. The organisations young people are involved in are diverse, most of them being local associations of different sizes. They range from the UNESCO Initiatives Centre in Wrocław, aimed at the education of young people with graduates and postgraduates acting as trainers, to the Polish Youth Projects Association – EYCA or the Polish scouts.

We also asked respondents whether they would consider joining a youth organisation in the future. Nine per cent said they would, and 46 per cent would not; 45 per cent were undecided. So despite believing that it is important for young people to get involved, almost half do not want to do so themselves. Those few respondents who did consider joining an organisation lacked a clear profile, with interest expressed for the Polish student sports association, the UNESCO centre in Wrocław, the Polish scouts, and various other smaller bodies. The idea of youth engagement through specific organisations thus remains an abstract ideal, not an actual desired practice.

## Learning about politics and accessing the world

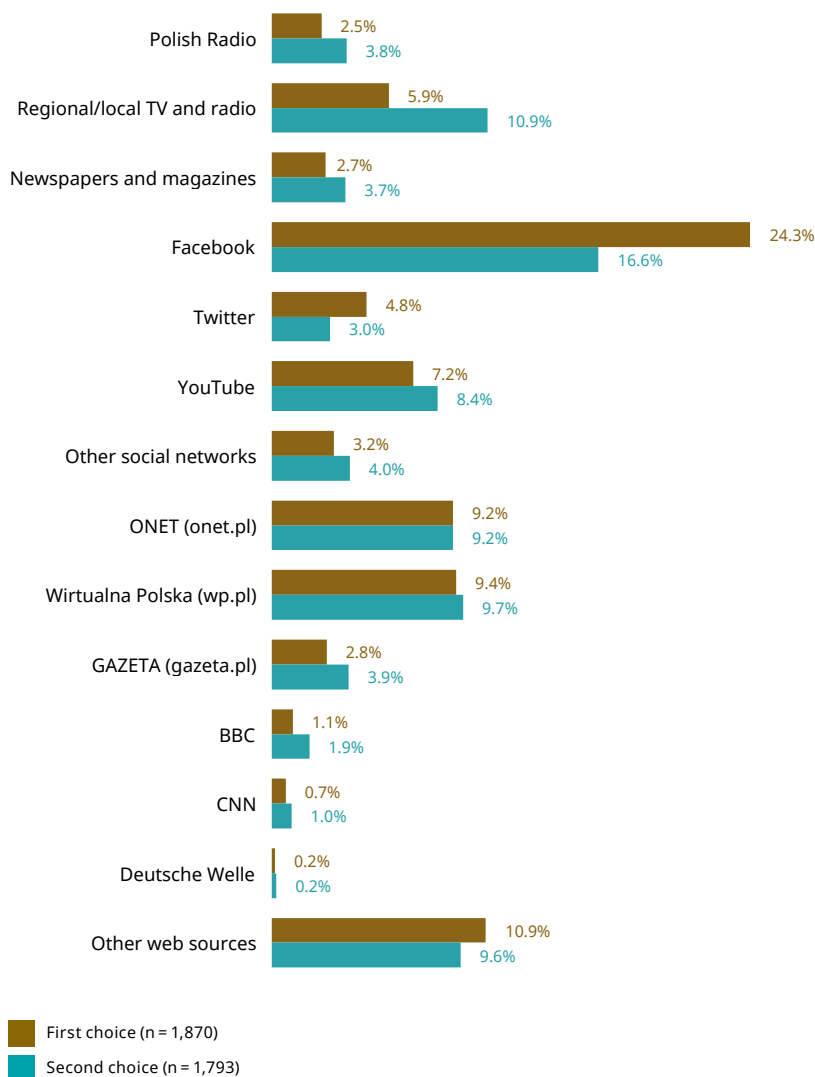
A key resource for young people to make up their political minds is the media, and our data confirm the importance of online media. ► **FIGURE 14** Facebook was the most important primary and secondary source of political information for the younger generation. Within the age cohort surveyed, younger respondents were more likely to use Facebook as their main source.

**Facebook is the most important source of political information.**

Beyond that, media use by young Poles was varied. Polish national and regional TV and radio remained important, as do specific web portals such as [www.onet.pl](http://www.onet.pl), [www.wp.pl](http://www.wp.pl), and [www.gazeta.pl](http://www.gazeta.pl). In our sample, more conventional media tended to be used more by male respondents as well as those who were more religious and expressed higher trust in the president. Among other Internet platforms, YouTube and, to a lesser extent, Twitter were the primary sources of information.

**FIGURE 14**

### Main source of information

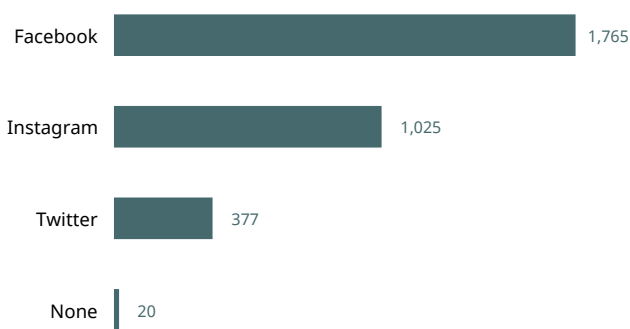


Source: ZOiS

Although Polish media usage remains somewhat diverse compared with that in some other countries in Eastern and Central Europe, such as Hungary, the current conservative government has received strong criticism from Reporters Without Borders. The media watchdog maintained in 2018 that ‘public media . . . have been transformed into government propaganda mouthpieces’.<sup>6</sup> It is likely that the polarised structure and often antagonistic tone of Polish media outlets relates to the low trust scores the media receive from young people (see section on trust below).

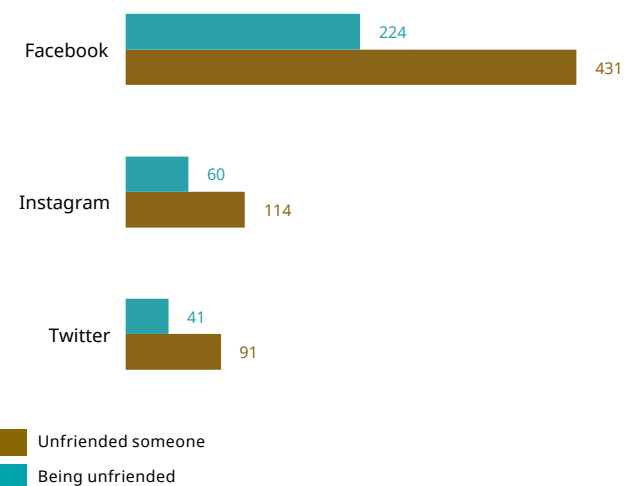
The most prominent social media site in Poland is Facebook. In particular among younger users, Instagram is then of increasing importance: those under 25 are more than 20 per cent more likely to use the platform. ► FIGURE 15 In terms of usage, it is clear that the daily practice of young people on those platforms is quite politicised. Asked whether they had excluded or unfriended someone because of political disputes, nearly 25 per cent of those who used Facebook said they had done so. ► FIGURE 16 Young people actively use social media for political discussions and judgements.

**FIGURE 15**  
**Social media use**



Source: ZOiS

**FIGURE 16**  
**Have you unfriended someone because of political disputes?**



Source: ZOiS

6 'Poland', Reporters Without Borders, <https://rsf.org/en/poland>.

## Assessing developments in the country

### Mixed assessments about the country's direction

One way of assessing what respondents make of their country's political, social, and economic development is to ask whether the country is developing in the right direction overall. Faced with that question, 37 per cent of the young Poles surveyed thought this was the case; but a majority was either undecided (30 per cent) or did not believe that Poland's development was going in the right direction (33 per cent). ► **FIGURE 17** Young Poles are clearly less optimistic than the overall population and tend to be much more undecided on that question. According to 2018 Eurobarometer data, 51 per cent of the Polish population thought their country was developing in the right direction, compared with 37 per cent who thought it was not.

**Young Poles are less optimistic than the overall population.**

Nevertheless, asked whether things generally had got better or worse over the last decade, 62 per cent of young Poles affirmed that life had improved, while 24 per cent stated the opposite. When respondents were asked more specifically about developments for young people, the picture looked less positive. ► **FIGURE 18** Around 51 per cent believed things had improved, while nearly one-third felt they had worsened.

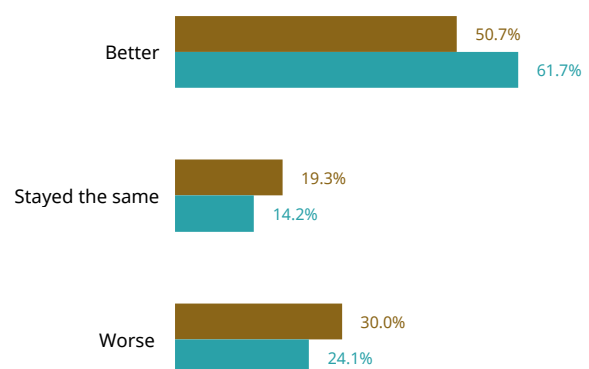
**FIGURE 17**  
Do you think that overall Poland is developing in the right direction?



n = 1,989

Source: ZOiS

**FIGURE 18**  
In your opinion, have things generally got better or worse?



■ For young people (n = 1,804)

■ For the average person (n = 1,817)

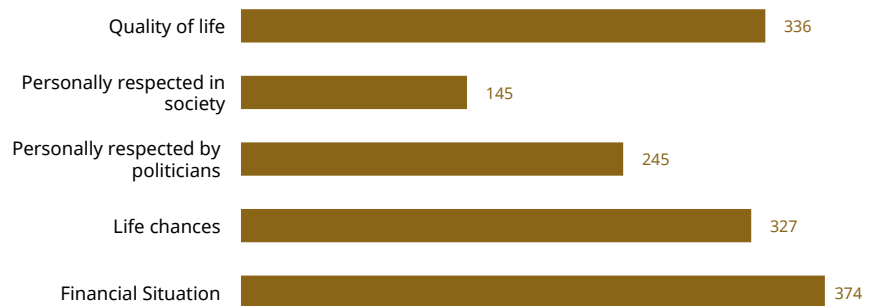
Source: ZOiS

For most, now is the best period to be a young person.

To probe these results, we asked those who gave a pessimistic view to spell out their assessments in more detail. Presented with five options, respondents said that their financial situation, life chances, and quality of life had deteriorated. Being less respected in society, and by politicians specifically, was cited less often but was still relevant. ► **FIGURE 19**

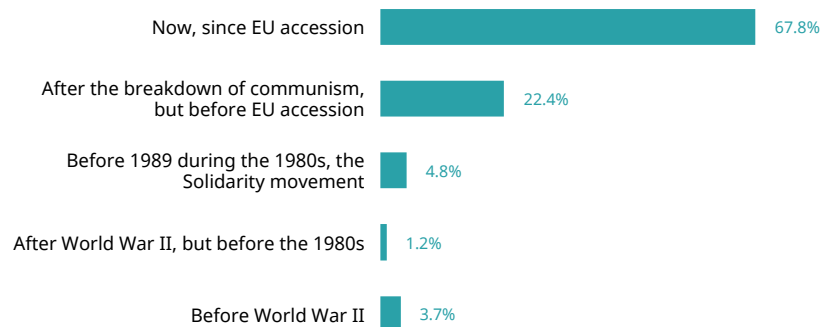
A further perspective on how young people assess their lives was obtained by enquiring how they benchmark their experience against other periods. We asked the following question: ‘Some adults and older people think that life was better in the past. In your opinion, in which era was it best to be a young person like you in Poland?’ ► **FIGURE 20** Although 68 per cent said the best period was the current one, referring to the time since the country’s 2004 accession to the EU, over one-fifth identified the period between 1989 and 2004 as the best. Little nostalgia exists, however, for the communist era.

**FIGURE 19**  
Specific ways in which things got worse



Source: ZOiS

**FIGURE 20**  
Best era to be a young person



n = 2,002

Source: ZOiS

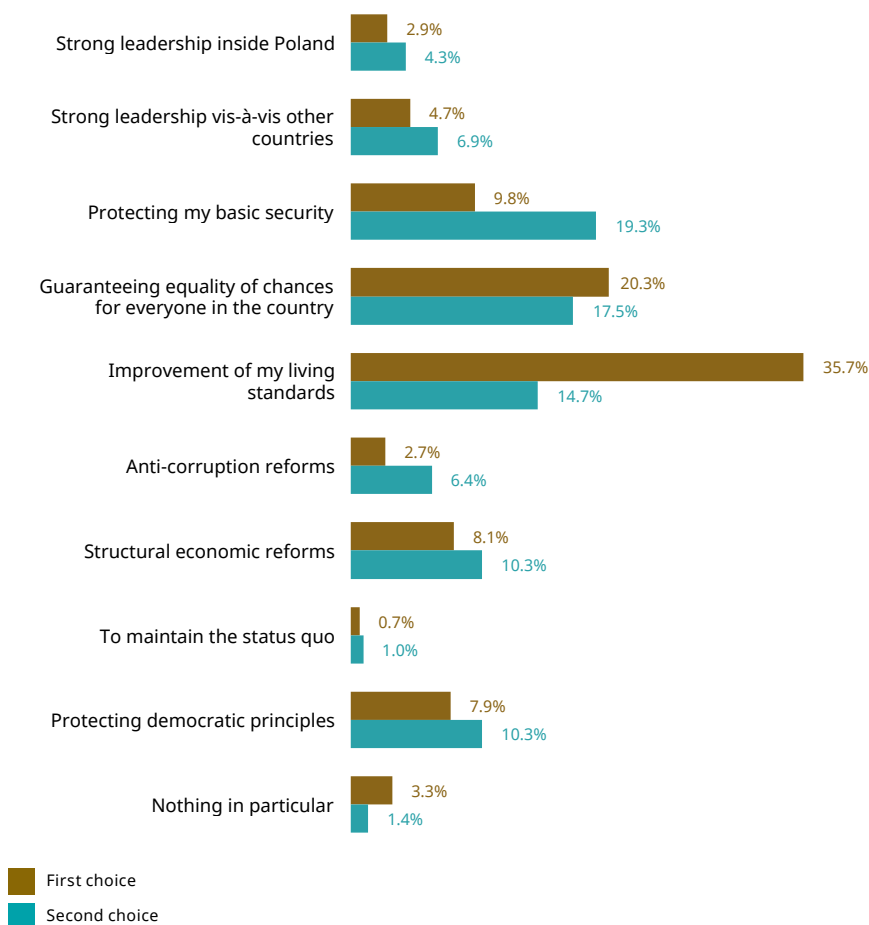


## Economic and political concerns

Asked what should be the priorities of the government, Polish youth overwhelmingly rated the improvement of living standards as the top priority. ► **FIGURE 21** Despite the continuous rise of economic indicators of living standards in the country (overall unemployment, for instance, is at 6 per cent, the lowest in the last three decades), socio-economic concerns remain the foremost priority for the young generation. This concern might convey fears that young people's economic future looks less promising than those of their parents or their peers abroad.

Apart from this economic priority, respondents said the government should focus on democratic aspirations, including responsibilities to ensure that everybody in society has the same chances to succeed and to protect democratic principles and basic personal security. These more overtly political points raise the question of whether the results convey a sense of resistance among young people in Poland to perceived democratic backsliding. These results also point to young people's fears about the future of their basic personal security.

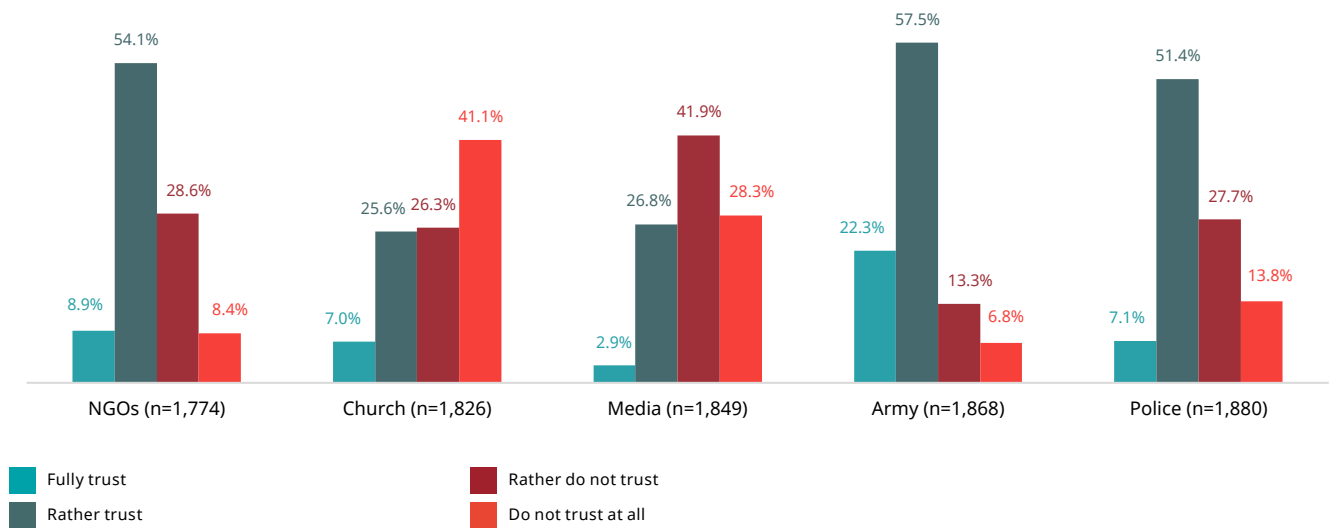
**FIGURE 21**  
**What do you expect from those in government?**



n = 2,002

Source: ZOiS

FIGURE 22  
To what extent do you trust...



Source: ZOIS

### Trust in people and institutions

Which institutions do young Poles trust? ► FIGURE 22 The army achieved high values, being (‘fully’ or ‘rather’) trusted by 80 per cent of respondents, similar to trust scores in Western European countries. The army may score highly because it is seen as an actor that is independent of everyday political struggles, unites the country with its mission to protect, and tends to be visible in commemorative marches and festivities across the country.

The Polish police and NGOs also gained very high trust scores: both were ‘fully’ or ‘rather’ trusted by around 60 per cent of respondents. For the latter, a tendency to perceive NGOs as apolitical and involved in social and humanitarian causes might be appealing to youth.

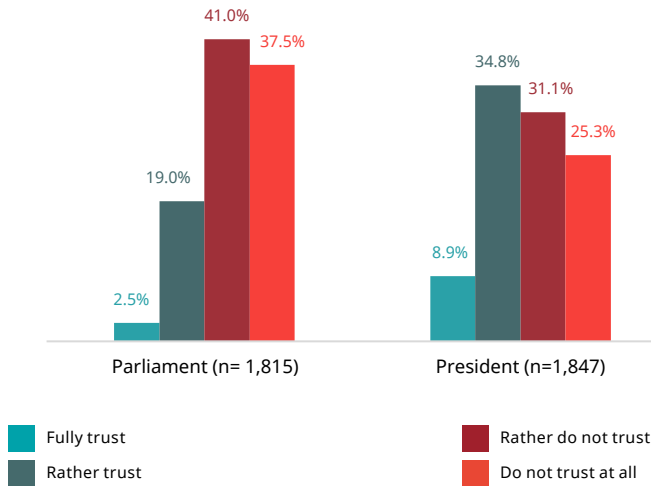
The media were viewed very negatively, being ‘fully’ or ‘rather’ trusted by around 30 per cent of those questioned. The polarisation of Poland’s media and its at times aggressive language, such as around the killing of Paweł Adamowicz, Gdańsk’s mayor, earlier in 2019, certainly feed into these assessments.

The very negative evaluation of the church stands out and relates to ongoing criticism of the church in relation to unaddressed issues of sexual abuse. In 2017 the church was trusted ‘quite a lot’ by more than 55 per cent of the general Polish population;<sup>7</sup> in February 2019, only 29 per cent of Polish youth ‘fully’ or ‘rather’ trusted the church.

Trust in the parliament is very low among young people.

7 EVS (2018): European Values Study 2017: Integrated Dataset (EVS 2017). GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7500 Data file Version 1.0.0, doi:10.4232/1.13090

**FIGURE 23**  
**To what extent do you trust...**



Source: ZOiS

As for Poland’s main political institutions, trust in the parliament was very low among young people, and views of the president were mixed at best. ► **FIGURE 23** The parliament was ‘fully’ or ‘rather’ trusted by slightly more than 20 per cent of young people — a value that is similar to that for the general Polish population if compared with data from the 2017 European Values Study. The president was ‘fully’ or ‘rather’ trusted by around 40 per cent of the young people surveyed.

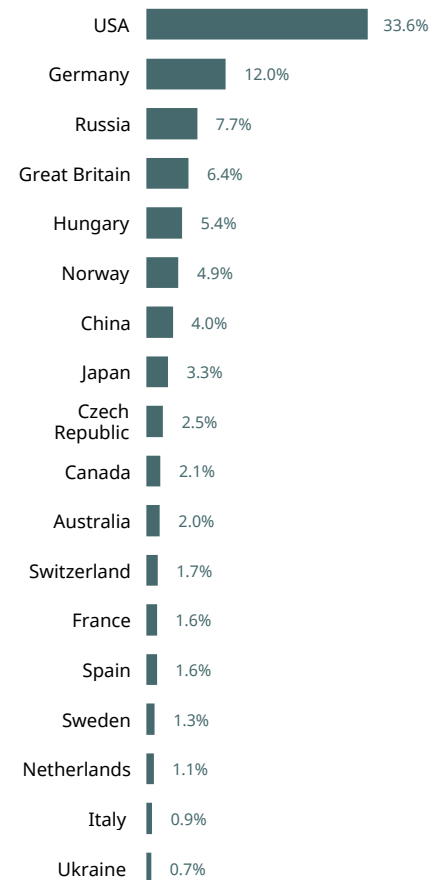
Whether this critical attitude towards political institutions should be understood as healthy scepticism of the current state of these institutions and their representatives or as more worrisome doubts about the value of democratic deliberation and a response to the country’s political polarisation is hard to determine.

## Poland and the world

### Foreign policy orientation

The survey asked respondents which country Poland should have closer relations with. The US was by far the most frequently mentioned country, cited by about a third of respondents, followed by Germany, at 12 per cent. ► **FIGURE 24** Taken together, all EU countries accounted for another third of the responses. Nearly 8 per cent chose Russia, despite the hostility characterising the political and public discourse between the two countries. Only 4 per cent of the respondents mentioned China, a relatively low figure given the country’s omnipresent economic influence across Eastern and Central Europe.

**FIGURE 24**  
**Poland should develop closer relations with...**



n = 1,270

Source: ZOiS

### Travel experience

Mobility within Poland is high. Eighty-seven per cent of the respondents stated that they had visited regions or cities in Poland other than their hometown in the past twelve months. When it comes to international mobility, the picture looks slightly different. Sixty per cent had travelled outside Poland over the last year. Nearly half of those with travel experience had been to other EU countries, by far the most common international travel destination. Only a small group of people had visited other countries: 3 per cent had been to the US, and similar numbers had gone to countries of the former Soviet Union other than Russia and Ukraine, and to Asia. Ukraine had been visited by 3.8 per cent of the respondents, and Russia by only 1 per cent.

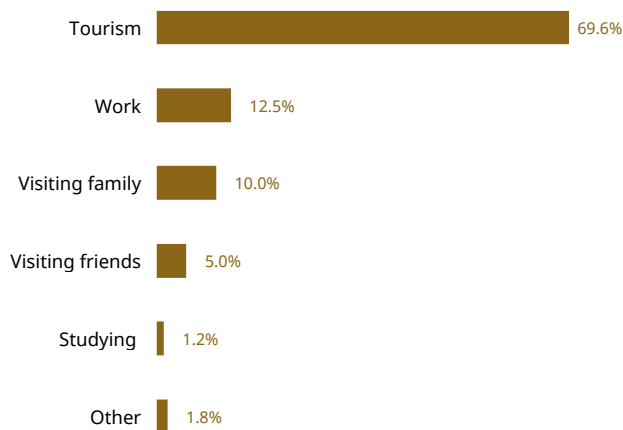
By far the most frequently mentioned reason for travelling abroad was tourism (70 per cent). The second-commonest reason was work (13 per cent). Visiting friends or family was mentioned by 15 per cent of the respondents.

► FIGURE 25

Among those who travelled within or beyond Poland for work, the largest number of respondents (38 per cent) had gone to other EU countries. A much smaller number had been to countries of the former Soviet Union, with Ukraine the most frequently chosen (4 per cent). Seventy-eight per cent of Polish youth had relatives in other regions of Poland, and a similarly high number had relatives in the EU, reflecting Poles' overall high mobility for work and study. One-third of the respondents had family in the US. A much smaller share mentioned relatives in countries of the former Soviet Union.

► FIGURE 26 Nearly 80 per cent of these relatives left Poland after the country's

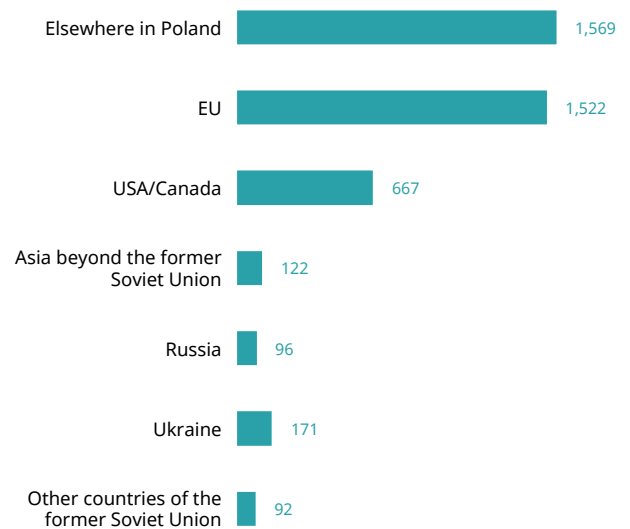
FIGURE 25  
Purpose of travel



n = 1,170

Source: ZOiS

FIGURE 26  
Residence of relatives



n = 1,989

Source: ZOiS

EU accession. ► **FIGURE 27** Links to family members who emigrated before 1989 were a lot less pronounced.

An important component of transnational personal links is the flow of money from abroad. ► **FIGURE 28** Nearly 15 per cent of our sample received money from relatives or friends in other EU countries, and slightly more from people they knew in Poland. Almost 14 per cent of respondents were given money by people in countries of the former Soviet Union.

Such financial remittances have become an important source of income for Poland, and they are of political and economic relevance for their recipients. The equivalent of around 1.3 per cent of Poland’s gross domestic product (GDP) arrived in the form of financial remittances in 2017, according to data by the World Bank. That value has stayed largely stable over the last five years but is well below that of other high-emigration countries in the region such as the Baltic countries and neighbouring Slovakia (2.3 per cent) or Hungary (3.5 per cent).<sup>8</sup>

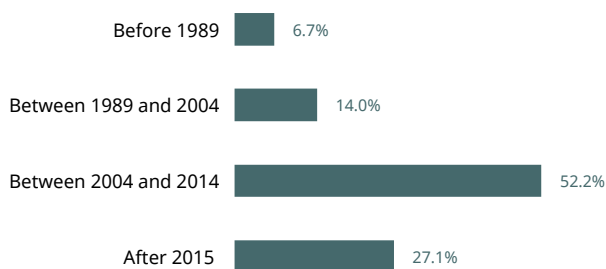
Nearly 15 per cent received money from relatives or friends in other EU countries.

### Migration intentions

Migration intentions are an important indicator of how well a population thinks its country is doing relative to other places. The young in particular have a higher propensity to leave their place of residence. In Poland, our survey shows that one-third would like to leave their place of residence. Among the remaining respondents, 16 per cent said they were unsure, and 50 per cent wanted to remain where they were.

One-third would like to leave their place of residence.

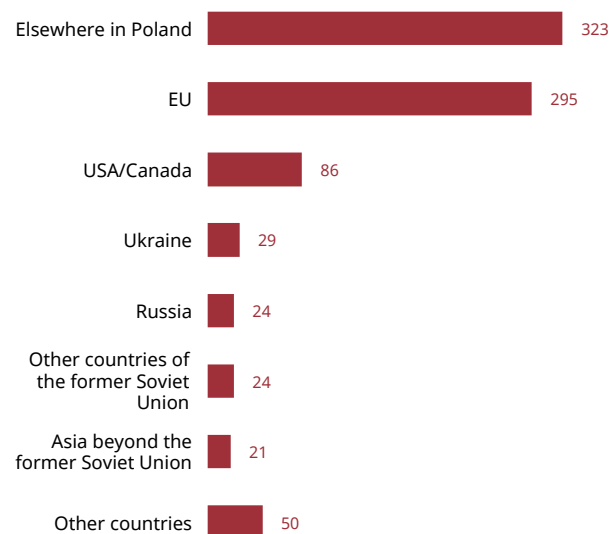
**FIGURE 27**  
When have your relatives or friends left to live abroad?



n = 1,438

Source: ZOIS

**FIGURE 28**  
Received money from relatives or friends who live...



Source: ZOIS

8 'Personal remittances, received (% of GDP)', World Bank, [https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?end=2017&most\\_recent\\_value\\_desc=true&start=1970&view=chart](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?end=2017&most_recent_value_desc=true&start=1970&view=chart).

Asked where they would like to go, the highest number (37 per cent) were attracted to other places in Poland. A sizable share of those who would like to leave cited other EU countries (24 per cent) and the US (16 per cent). Other regions are significantly less appealing to Polish youth. As triggers for their departure, 27 per cent of young Poles mentioned the combined worsening of the political and economic situation. A worsening economic situation alone was cited by 21 per cent, and a deteriorating political situation by 5 per cent. Knowing others who had already left, which might make emigration easier, was given by 10 per cent of the respondents as a motivation to leave.

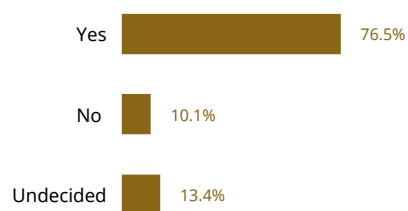
### Attitudes towards the EU

Seventy-seven per cent of the young Poles in our survey stated that it was the right choice for Poland to join the EU in 2004. Of the remaining respondents, 10 per cent disagreed, while 13 per cent did not know how to answer the question. ► **FIGURE 29** So despite a press that is sceptical of, and at times even hostile to, the EU, and a generally critical attitude of the ruling PiS towards European integration, positive views of the EU persist among young people. This is in line with the generally positive evaluations of European institutions and the approval of the country's EU membership seen among the wider Polish population.

## Positive views of the EU persist among young people.

FIGURE 29

Was it right for Poland to have joined the EU?



n = 2,002

Source: ZOiS

### Ideas on Europe and Russia

The survey also explored what young Poles associate with Europe and Russia. We asked respondents to list their two primary associations. Young people had a generally positive view of Europe, encompassing not only economic opportunities and freedom of travel but also broader political features and lifestyle aspects. Some expressed concerns about high numbers of migrants and persisting economic inequalities.

As for Russia, the associations looked markedly different. It was hard to identify any positive attitudes expressed towards Russia. More than 80 per cent of respondents mentioned various negative associations, including cultural stereotypes (alcohol, cold winters), an expansionist foreign policy, the feeling that Russia is a major threat to Poland, and the domestic disarray perceived to characterise Russia. With regard to the political situation, respondents cited the lack of democratic freedom and political competition in Russia, alongside economic problems.

## Values and ideas of community

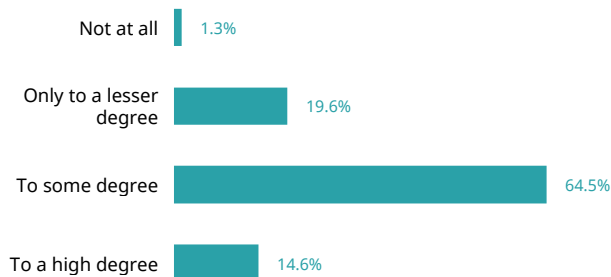
Young Poles overall think that others living in Poland share their values. Nearly two-thirds affirmed that values were shared to a high or some degree. ► **FIGURE 30** Based on a photograph, we asked specifically whether homosexual couples should be allowed to show their affection for one another in public. Nearly 60 per cent answered that they should be allowed to do so. There was no difference between the view on male and female homosexual couples.

We also used a range of questions to enquire into the broader community values held by the respondents. Here we included a set of questions relating to how respondents envisaged the Polish social and political community they would like to live in. The answers to eight questions were aggregated into four separate indices on views on community: conservative-national, liberal-national, liberal citizenship, and multicultural.

The **conservative-national** index included statements that affirm the importance of following the same customs and traditions in a country and the centrality of national culture and history to the school curriculum. The **liberal-national** index emphasised gaining access to the citizenship of the country while stressing the need for immigrants to identify with their national culture. The **liberal citizenship** index indicated that all citizens should have the same opportunities in life and stressed the importance of free speech, including the right to criticise religion. The **multicultural** index emphasised that it is best if a country is diverse and suggested that the state should make additional efforts to cultivate that diversity.

Polish youth expressed the highest commitment to a **liberal** understanding of identity centred on citizenship and the exercise of **citizenship** duties. This was followed by a rather **liberal** understanding of **nationalism**. The often-discussed conservative values of Polish youth were not supported by our data, as the **conservative-national** idea of identity scored rather low. At the same time, the **multicultural** interpretation of identity received a similarly low score. ► [FIGURE 31](#)

**FIGURE 30**  
**Are your values shared by other people in Poland?**



n = 1,715

Source: ZOIS

**FIGURE 31**  
**Community values**  
Average support on a scale from 1 to 100\*



\* Respondents were asked to agree / disagree (on a scale) with each of the statements underlying these categories.

Source: ZOIS

## Conclusion

Poland's younger generation and its political participation are worth paying close attention to in the near future. While expressing trust in protests, young people on average distrust their country's official political institutions. Young people in Poland are very aware of recent protests in their country and participated in these protests in high numbers. They also grant significant legitimacy to protest as a form of political participation. Somewhat counterintuitively in this context, only one-third of survey respondents said they were politically interested, and many were aware that they were not sufficiently informed about their country's history.

Trust in political institutions and the media was generally very low, while NGOs as well as the army and the police received high trust scores. The polarisation of politics that has occurred in Poland over recent years is certainly conveyed in these low levels of trust in representative institutions and the media. The crucial question for the second half of 2019 and the beginning of 2020 is how this political assessment will translate into the voting behaviour of young people in particular.

The international political orientation of young people clearly points to the US and other EU countries. It is with these regions that young Poles want to develop closer relations, and the perception of the EU is overwhelmingly positive, with strong support for Poland's EU membership. Young people's personal experiences from travelling, working, or having family and friends abroad also relate primarily to the US and other EU countries. The most recent personal links are to Europe, but ties with the US are important too, reflecting also Poland's overall security policy. Moreover, young Poles are an internationally mobile and connected group.

With a parliamentary election coming up in October and a presidential election following shortly afterwards, the way young people want to see their country move forward will be a critical component for understanding Poland's political developments. Politicians want to convince the electorate that they appeal to young voters and can symbolically represent the country's future. The upcoming elections will reveal very different visions of that future, from inward-looking conservative to progressive forces. This survey and the voting intentions expressed by respondents conveyed how divided young people are in their political orientation as the election cycle opens, and the political field can shift significantly until ballots are cast.

The international political orientation clearly points to the US and EU countries.



## Imprint

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### Published by

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### Citation

Félix Krawatzek: “Youth in Poland: Outlook on life and  
political attitudes”, ZOiS Report 4/2019, ([https://www.  
zois-berlin.de/fileadmin/media/Dateien/ZOiS\\_Reports/  
ZOiS\\_Report\\_4\\_2019.pdf](https://www.zois-berlin.de/fileadmin/media/Dateien/ZOiS_Reports/ZOiS_Report_4_2019.pdf))

ISSN 2512-7233

### Layout

Yuko Stier

### Cover image

Denis Karpenkov / Alamy Stock Foto

