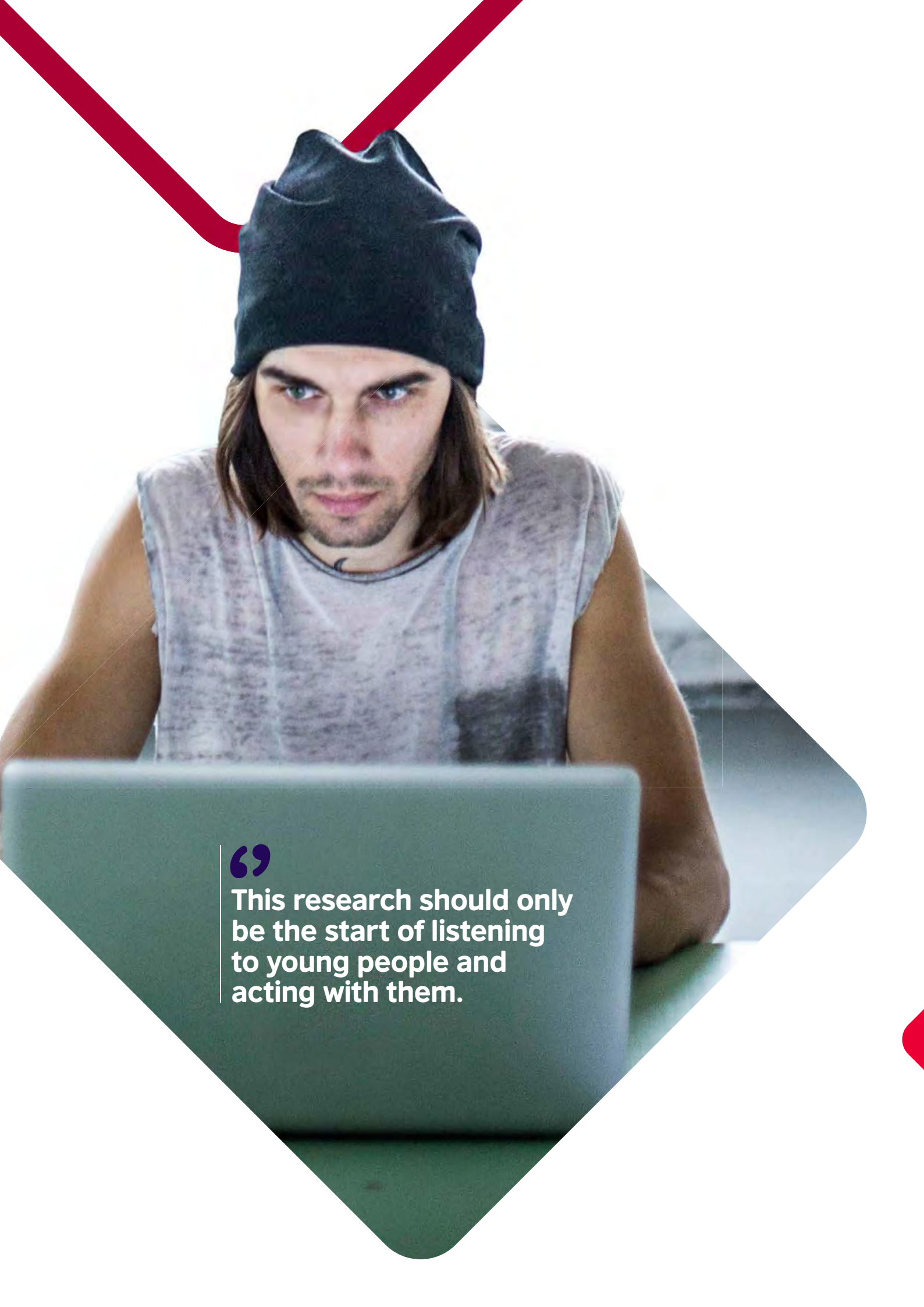


Next Generation

Poland

May 2021





“

This research should only be the start of listening to young people and acting with them.

Acknowledgements

Authors

Sound Connections

Jennifer Raven
Lawrence Becko

Centrala

Alicja Kaczmarek

Stocznia

Jan Herbst
Agata Gołasa

Contributors

Next Generation Poland Academic Task Force

Dr Roch Dunin-Wąsowicz (LSE)
Dr Piotr Godzisz (Birmingham City University)
Dr Kinga Goodwin (UCL)
Dr Anna Horolec (University of Warsaw)
Dr Jakub Jablonowski (University of Exeter)
Katarzyna Malinowska (University of Warsaw)
Dr Joanna Schmidt (Poznan University of Economics)
Dr Bartłomiej Walczak (University of Warsaw)
Jan J Zygmuntowski (Instrat)

Next Generation Poland Young Advisers

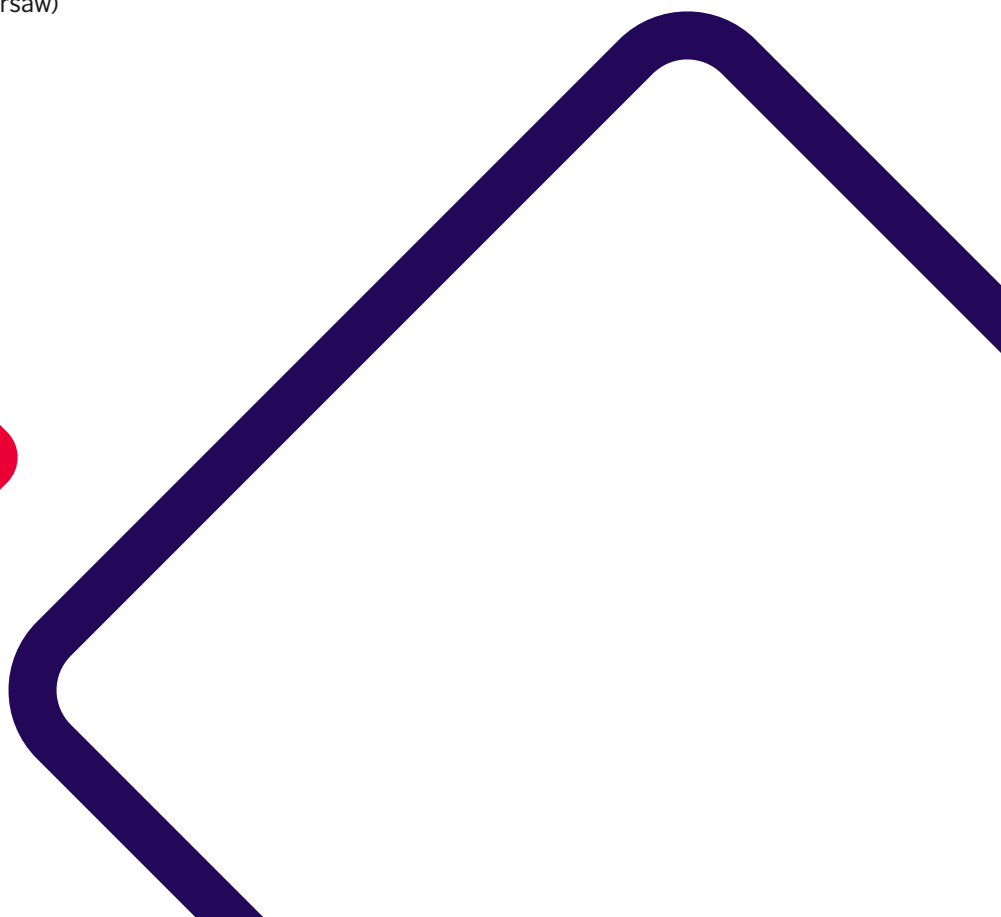
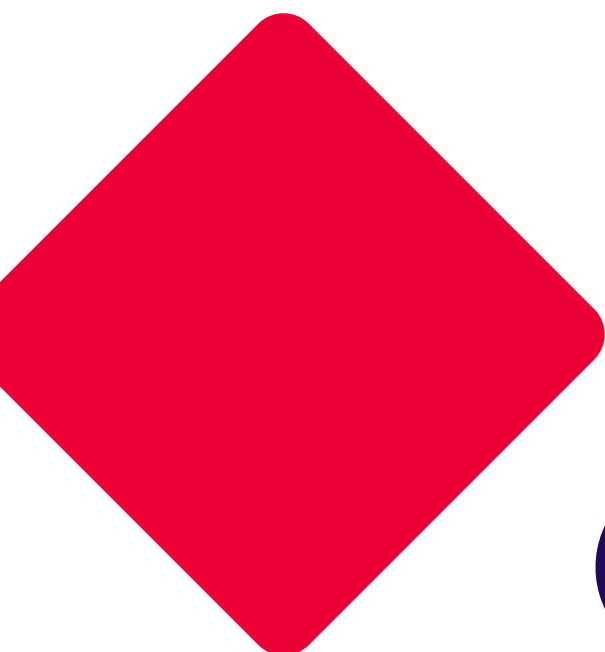
Nawojka Liwia Ciborska
Antonina Lewandowska
Marta Marsicka
Pola Plaskota
Michał Sienicki
Aneta Ślęczek

British Council

James Perkins, Senior Research Adviser, UK
Julia Plachecka, Projects and Partnerships Manager, Poland
Ewa Puzdrowska, Head of Education and Society, Poland
Christine Wilson, Head of Research, UK

Disclaimer

The views expressed are those of the authors and contributors based on extensive consultation and review of relevant studies and literature, and do not necessarily reflect those of the British Council.



Contents

Forewords	4
Executive summary	6
A 'post-transformation' generation	6
Self-reliance and opportunity in the face of adverse conditions	6
A generation experiencing social polarisation	7
Recommendations for a better future	8
Chapter 1 Introducing the research	9
1.1 About Next Generation research	9
1.1.1 What is Next Generation?	9
1.1.2 Purpose	9
1.1.3 Who was involved?	9
1.2 Methodology	10
1.2.1 Sample and approach	10
1.2.2 Research aims and objectives	10
1.2.3 Research instruments	10
1.2.4 Research advisers	13
1.2.5 Assumptions, considerations and limitations	14
1.2.6 Beyond the research	14
1.3 Young Poles in context	15
1.3.1 The Polish context	15
1.3.2 Previous research into young adults in Poland	17
Chapter 2 Main findings	21
Preview: Main findings	21
2.1 Theme 1: Experience and attitudes: aspirational optimists, facing new emotional and generational challenges	22
2.1.1 More satisfied in the private realm	22
2.1.2 Aspirational, self-reliant and flexible	24
Spotlight: Achieving happiness and success	30
2.1.3 Emotional discontent and complex challenges	32
2.1.4 Under-prepared by education	34
2.2 Theme 2: Engagement and outlook: Digitally savvy and globally minded, with mixed feelings towards their country and the wider world	35
2.2.1 Globally minded and digitally literate	35
2.2.2 Connected to their country but lacking influence	36
2.2.3 Pessimistic about domestic and global affairs	36

Micro-study: Digital activism among young adults	42
2.3 Theme 3: Voice, view and values: Disenchanted democrats with polarised views	45
2.3.1 Lacking influence in politics but hoping for change	45
2.3.2 Polarised in views and values	49
2.3.3 Demands for personal economic freedoms and public spending	50
Chapter 3 Differences among young Poles	53
3.1 Gender differences	53
3.2 Differences between younger and older age groups	54
3.3 Differences in education, employment status and income level	56
3.4 Geopolitical differences between cities, towns and rural areas	56
Spotlight: Mapping regional differences	58
Chapter 4 Recommendations and conclusion	61
4.1 Main recommendations	61
4.2 Further suggestions and next steps	64
4.2.1 Research activities	64
4.2.2 Research topics	64
Bibliography	66
Appendix 1 Details of Academic Task Force members and Young Advisers	68
Appendix 2 Social media research – observed Facebook groups in more detail	70
Appendix 3 Notes on the mapping methodology used in Chapter 3	73

Forewords

I am delighted to introduce *Next Generation Poland*.

This is the first in-depth examination of Poland's youth since the outbreak of Covid-19. The research was conducted against the backdrop of this intensifying pandemic, as well as divisive elections and the largest street protests in the country since the fall of communism. It brings us the views and voices of those who will be responsible for rebuilding Poland from the rubble of Covid-19 and finding a path through current political and social dislocation.

The youth population in Poland is fascinatingly complex, and in places seemingly contradictory. They are simultaneously internationally minded and globally aware, but happiest within their home. They are proud of their country, though sceptical about its political system. Most of all this report shows a drive in Poland's young people that puts 'ambition, skill and hard work' at the centre of a successful life. Young people know that they are experiencing a better quality of life than their parents, and the report communicates their anxiety about making the most of this and not wasting their chances.

This is fascinating in its own right, and we hope it will be useful to stakeholders across Poland, the UK and beyond. But it is also vital information for the British Council and it will inform and guide our work for the years ahead.

Our role is to build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and Poland through arts and culture, education and the English language. A central objective for us is to design and run programmes that meet the needs and aspirations of young people, and support their personal, social and economic development, and promote open and inclusive societies. The British Council's work in Poland always starts with partnerships and results in mutually beneficial outcomes. This report helps us respond precisely to what we hear from those we want to connect with the most.

“

The youth population in Poland is fascinatingly complex, and in places seemingly contradictory.

A fascinating and accessible read, *Next Generation Poland* joins a suite of reports conducted across the world, and offers interesting comparisons particularly with other recent European studies. Young Poles, like their UK, Irish, German and Italian counterparts, are digitally savvy and find their news almost exclusively online, but are also wise enough to interrogate it. There's a shared absence of faith in their political systems, and a dissatisfaction with the education offered to them – particularly a strong feeling that it is not equipping them with the right skills for the jobs of the future.

Yet social engagement is rising – this is not an apathetic generation. Like their European counterparts, young Poles are concerned about employment opportunities, but also have high expectations of the kind of work they want to do. Against the trend in Europe, social and family ties seem to be strengthening in Poland, and religious belief is high even if churchgoing is in decline. There is a troubling theme emerging about the challenges young people face around mental health and drug abuse. This is surely a call to action.

This report has tracked views across the most extraordinary year most of us will ever live through. I would like to thank the teams at Sound Connections, Centrala and Stocznia, the Academic Task Force and Young Advisers, as well as our British Council team, who worked hard together and separately to bring this report to you. The support of the British Embassy in Warsaw has been invaluable, and we thank them.

I hope you enjoy this report as much as I have, and that you return to it in your 'need to know' moments. All that it teaches us will echo in our work in the months and years to come.

Colm McGivern

Director Poland, British Council

The world is changing more quickly than ever before.

Increasingly polarised worldviews, a widening gap in living standards and economic opportunities, multiple challenges to liberal democracies, the acceleration of social media as a news source, the climate emergency and continuing conflicts worldwide: these all characterise our experience of the 21st century so far. However, an additional factor has emerged in this dynamically changing landscape – and it is one that gives hope.

In fact, a global uprising of humanity has begun before our very eyes – one which proves that civil societies are becoming increasingly active. Mass protests on virtually all continents are fighting – on a daily basis – for the improvement of labour market conditions, for environmental protection, for the rights of women and minorities, and for more ethical and equitable access to the opportunities of digital. These protests point to the urgent need to create a different, better tomorrow, with us young people increasingly becoming the face of that tomorrow.

The best possible tomorrow will not be created without dialogue and mutual respect, and that includes decision makers and wider society listening seriously to the voices of young people today. This could include public forums and consultations, and assessment of the work of formal and informal nongovernmental organisations with youth networks. Above all, however, young people not only should but *must* be involved in the process of creating the best possible change – after all, our future and that of the next generations is at stake.

The report in front of you is a compendium of information about the hopes and concerns of the younger generation in Poland today. It is a vital collection of data and insight, showing the lived realities of the grassroots in all their complexity. I hope that the publication will become an important roadmap in your way of thinking about the future, and prove that listening to the world of today is crucial for the creation of a better tomorrow.

Antonina Lewandowska

Future Leader, British Council 2019

Activist, Feminist, Sex Educator

“

Young people *must* be involved in the process of creating the best possible change.

Executive summary

Like all research conducted in the series, *Next Generation Poland* set out to explore the experiences of young adults – in this case, those aged 18–30 – at a critical moment in their nation's history. Poland is undergoing a period of political change marked by antagonism with the EU and controversy over policies concerning the rights of women, sexual minorities and migrants, which has led some to suggest that Poland is increasingly becoming a socially divided country.

Unlike other Next Generation studies – and unbeknownst to the researchers when the work was being devised – this research would be conducted entirely online during the global Covid-19 pandemic, the severity of which only became clear as the project began.

While the pandemic – and the restrictions which followed – dramatically changed how the research was carried out, it appears to have had less impact than anticipated on the results themselves. Although the events surrounding Covid-19 were a constant presence, survey respondents and focus group participants were able to look beyond the immediacy of the crisis and share with us their views on longer-standing issues, as well as their hopes and fears for the future.

To that effect, this report is both framed by the pandemic and transcends it. We encourage readers to consider the findings and recommendations in that light.

A 'post-transformation' generation

The first chapter of the report outlines the sociopolitical and economic transformation that Poland has experienced over the last three decades, before sharing a range of contextual data and findings about the young population from previous studies.

The young adults surveyed in this research are the first generation to grow up in a post-communist Poland, which, in the space of just 30 years, has transitioned to a free market economy, NATO membership and EU accession. As such, their experience of, and attitudes toward, life are both shaped by, and markedly different to, that of their parents' generation.

Self-reliance and opportunity in the face of adverse conditions

The second chapter outlines the main findings of the research, revealing a generation that is optimistic about their private lives and their own futures, but pessimistic about the public realm, the world of work and the plight of their country – and indeed the world. They aspire to independence and financial security, satisfying work, strong relationships and good social connections.

However, they experience undercurrents of emotional discontent and anxiety in the face of the complexities of modern life, and face a variety of challenges and limiting factors, including an education they perceive as inadequate, a lack of affordable housing, the prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse, and a lack of job offers. The pandemic has led to further negative effects on their lives.

They are a digitally savvy generation – they are at home in the digital realm and very comfortable using, and interacting via, new technologies. While they eschew more traditional information sources in favour of the internet and social media, they are nonetheless wary of fake news and its consequences.

In general, they feel connected to both their country and the wider world, with many describing themselves as global citizens. They consider themselves to be more tolerant and progressive than previous generations, but they are pessimistic about the impact they can have when it comes to domestic and global affairs. They are divided when it comes to the benefits of European integration, migration and globalisation – some believe these are overwhelmingly positive phenomena, while others fear a range of negative consequences for themselves and their country. While many would like to emigrate to countries such as the UK, Germany and the US, others wish to build a life in Poland.

Whatever their preference, they largely feel they lack power to shape the future. A majority state they have little influence in the political and civic realms and that their voices are seldom heard. While they are overwhelmingly in favour of democracy, many feel disinterested in formal politics and they are divided in their affiliations and alignments.

They are a generation polarised in their political, religious and social views and values – the most divisive issues being the rights of women and sexual minorities, as well as immigration and relations with the EU. Despite these differences, they share a desire for more personal economic freedom, more public spending and more effective governance, which they hope will lead to a more tolerant society in future.

A generation experiencing social polarisation

This generation is entering adulthood at a time when Polish society appears to be fracturing along particular social and regional lines. The generation we encountered express views which vary depending on their age, gender, level of education, employment status and geographical location.

There appears to be an intra-generational shift occurring within this age group, opening up new perspectives for policymaking. The younger age range of 18- to 24-year-olds is revealed to be more satisfied with life but less sure of their direction. They are more globally minded, value arts and culture, and are keen to emigrate. They tend to hold liberal views on sex education and the rights of sexual minorities, but are less likely to feel heard by those in power.

Their older counterparts (aged 25–30) are less civically engaged but more likely to call for change. They feel that they have more voice and influence, and have higher expectations for their careers and financial situation, but tend to be less tolerant towards minorities.

There are also striking differences between men and women across the population. Young Polish women are more satisfied with life overall but acknowledge a broader range of societal problems, including those associated with Covid-19. They tend to support the rights of sexual minorities and are in favour of sex education, but are less open to immigration. They are more vocally democratic, favouring EU membership – but they are less likely to feel heard.

In contrast, men are more likely to feel proud of Poland and its history, and to express concerns about loss of national identity. They tend to support greater autonomy for Poland, and are less likely to favour EU membership. They are less likely to support the rights of sexual minorities, and more likely to feel they can influence events around them.

Cross-cutting these themes are further divisions based on education level, income and location. There is a correlation between higher levels of education, employment and life satisfaction. Higher earners with higher-level qualifications – who more often live in cities – are more likely to participate in cultural activities, express democratic values and show concern for environmental and humanitarian causes. Higher earners, in particular, are more likely to feel that they are heard by politicians and institutions, and that politics addresses the issues that matter to them.

Meanwhile, those with lower education and lower earners – and particularly those living in small towns and rural areas – are more pessimistic and more likely to emigrate, while valuing stability, family and their Catholic faith. They feel worst hit by the pandemic, but more able to affect their local communities, calling for better investment in infrastructure and connectivity.

More in-depth mapping, shared towards the end of Chapter 3, illustrates a divide across Poland, which mirrors a national split which has been widely discussed in public discourse over the last five years – with respondents in the north and west of the country tending towards a liberal outlook, and those in the southern and eastern regions holding more traditional values.

Right Using public transport during the Covid-19 pandemic. Cracow, January 2021



Recommendations for a better future

The report concludes with a series of recommendations informed by young adults themselves which focus on five main areas.

- 1. Economic reform:** enabling more personal economic freedom by reducing regulation and taxes, encouraging greater entrepreneurialism among young people and ensuring high-quality job opportunities are available to all.
- 2. Public spending and policy reform:** increasing public spending on health and social care to remove barriers to attaining significant life goals and financial stability, including drug and alcohol abuse and mental health challenges. A more general refocusing of public policy on the needs of younger generations, for example to address the pressures of the housing market and to tackle global issues that concern them, such as climate change.
- 3. Educational reform:** reimagining and reforming education away from its theoretical traditions towards a more open system which encourages greater sensitivity and tolerance, by teaching life skills, ethics and empathy, providing careers advice and sex education, promoting diversity and discussion, and valuing volunteering and cultural participation.
- 4. Participation:** encouraging greater participation and collective action to refresh politics and civil society, by promoting youth governance, direct democracy and activism, as well as harnessing the resources of youth organisations and digital platforms to support the building of confidence, agency and trust among young people and across wider society.
- 5. Tolerance and freedom:** promoting greater tolerance and freedom through the above actions and by galvanising the nongovernmental organisation and non-profit sector to promote greater dialogue and celebrate difference and diversity in Polish society.

The report concludes with a series of additional recommendations for further research and policy discussion, including consultation, mapping and profiling on topics including identity and voice, quality of life and emotional health, digital development, emigration, globalisation and climate change.

We believe that further research, exploration and discussion of these questions and suggestions will enable policymakers, communities and young adults themselves to take this initial research and analysis to the next stage of its evolution. The aim is to catalyse conversation and ultimately drive policy change that supports younger generations to fulfil their potential as creative, fulfilled and active citizens in Poland, in line with the overarching aims of the Next Generation series.



Left Protests following the judgment of the Constitutional Court on abortion in Poland. Katowice, 26 October 2020

Chapter 1

Introducing the research

1.1 About Next Generation research

1.1.1 What is Next Generation?

Next Generation is a global British Council research series focusing on young people, usually aged 18–30, living in countries that are experiencing a period of significant change. The research programme has now been running for over a decade and has amplified the voices of young people in over a dozen different countries around the world.

The British Council created Next Generation based on a belief that it is important to listen to, and engage with, young people not just because they are the next generation of influencers, leaders and shapers of their countries' futures, but also because they have the capacity to create change and make a difference to their societies in the present.

In particular, Next Generation examines the conditions that support young people to become creative, fulfilled and active citizens. This involves looking at themes such as education, employment and lifestyle, as well as their values and beliefs. The research seeks to understand their hopes and fears for their country, and the extent to which young people engage with the wider world beyond their country's borders.

1.1.2 Purpose

At the heart of this series is a commitment to exploring *youth voice* and *choice*, with a view to achieving three main aims:

1. understanding young people's attitudes and aspirations, and how the changes around them shape their life choices and worldview
2. amplifying youth voice by putting their views and ideas front and centre
3. supporting better youth policymaking by ensuring their voices are represented in decisions that may have lasting implications on their lives.

Next Generation Poland is the latest edition in the series and has been written during a time of political and social change in the country, and against a backdrop of turbulent global events, most notably the rapidly escalating climate crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. The study seeks to analyse the conditions that support young people and allow them to reach their potential as fulfilled, productive and active citizens. The recommendations that conclude the report are intended to promote discussion and policy change.

1.1.3 Who was involved?

The research has been commissioned by the British Council's Research and Policy Insight Team working in close collaboration with the British Council in Poland. The research has been led, delivered and produced by a bilingual UK–Polish partnership comprising:

- Jennifer Raven and Lawrence Becko (Sound Connections, UK)
- Alicja Kaczmarek (Centrala Space, UK)
- Jan Herbst and Agata Gołasa (Stocznia, Poland).

The partnership has been privileged to be guided and advised by two expert task forces:

- **academic advisers:** an expert panel of researchers based at major universities in Poland and the UK
- **young adult advisers:** a group of six young leaders who are advocating for change and progress in Poland.



At the heart of this series is a commitment to exploring youth voice and choice.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 Sample and approach

The Next Generation series follows a mixed-methodology approach to gathering data. The methodology and sample size vary slightly between countries. Next Generation reports typically include a desk-based literature review and a national survey with a diverse segment of the young population covering both urban and rural locations. We surveyed 2,000 young adults aged 18–30 across Poland, and ran focus groups attended by a further 92 participants. We conducted four stages of research:

1. a literature review summarising relevant quantitative and qualitative research about younger people in Poland
2. the Next Generation Survey, a national online questionnaire tailored especially for Poland
3. a series of 12 interactive focus group interviews (FGIs)
4. research into civic participation on social media among young adults.

1.2.2 Research aims and objectives

Five main themes and corresponding research questions guided our methodology.

1. **Experience:** what is young adults' sense of their own lives? What is their lifestyle? What do they experience day-to-day? What forms of culture and entertainment do they enjoy? How do they feel their life compares to that of their parents and peers? How optimistic are they about the future?
2. **Civic engagement:** what is their engagement in the civic, economic, social and democratic life of Poland, and what are their aspirations on influencing their community, country and wider world? What do they make of changes in Polish society and how does this affect their social and civic engagement?
3. **Attitudes and perspectives:**
 - a. Navigating the world – what are their primary sources of information? How do they navigate news and social media? Who do they trust?

- b. Global outlook – what are young people's attitudes towards other countries, their experience of other countries and cultures (through education, travel, etc.) and their sense of nationalism or internationalism? How do they see the relationship, now and in the future, between Poland and the UK, the EU and the wider world?

4. **Voice:** do young adults feel their voices are being heard by their elders, by leaders, by the media and opinion formers?

5. **Policy needs:** what policies are needed to support young people across Poland in achieving their potential as creative, fulfilled and active citizens? What are their priority issues, fears, concerns and aspirations?

Alongside these questions, we collected data on demographics (including age and gender), geographical location, level of education, employment status and household composition.

1.2.3 Research instruments

Literature review

A literature review was conducted in two parts, the first being a review of existing research reports focused primarily on quantitative data, describing demographics, social and economic living conditions, and attitudes of young adults in Poland.

The findings of the literature review informed the design of the survey questions, providing context and a clear reference point for interpretation of data collected during the Next Generation Survey. In particular, the literature review guided us on which questions needed to be asked, and which could already be answered. In each section, we focused on the phenomena and social processes which related most closely to young adults aged 18–30.

Wherever possible, we tried to show the changes in time, the differences between young adults and people of other age categories, as well as the contrast between Poland and other European Union countries (which, at the time, still included the UK). Creating the study, we used both official data (mainly compiled by Eurostat and Statistics Poland), as well as the results of Polish and international surveys carried out in Poland such as the European Value Survey, European Social Survey and Global Entrepreneurship Monitor.

A particular challenge was the fact that the 18–30 age group which was of interest to us is not often specified in research and the development of official data.

Where possible (for example, where source data was available), we processed the data ourselves to gain a clearer picture of the sample age group. Where only processed data was available, we tried to consider the information which related to the age category most similar to the 18–30 age group. Therefore, in some cases, the information relates to 16- to 26-year-olds or 18- to 34-year-olds, rather than the target sample of 18- to 30-year-olds.

A second report explored the key topics and current trends in research on younger people in Poland. The qualitative literature review examined current topics from interdisciplinary discussions and research about young Poles. It drew on over a dozen different research papers and seminar reviews, and covered topics including:

- youth and popular culture
- the psychosocial condition of young people
- young people entering adult life late
- the impact of the internet
- education
- global outlook and international integration
- gender and sexuality
- youth voice.

This review provides only a snapshot of current thinking and topics which are part of an ever-evolving exploration of young people's behaviours and attitudes.

The literature reviews were conducted in May 2020 and updated in January 2021 shortly before the production of the final draft of this report.

Next Generation Survey

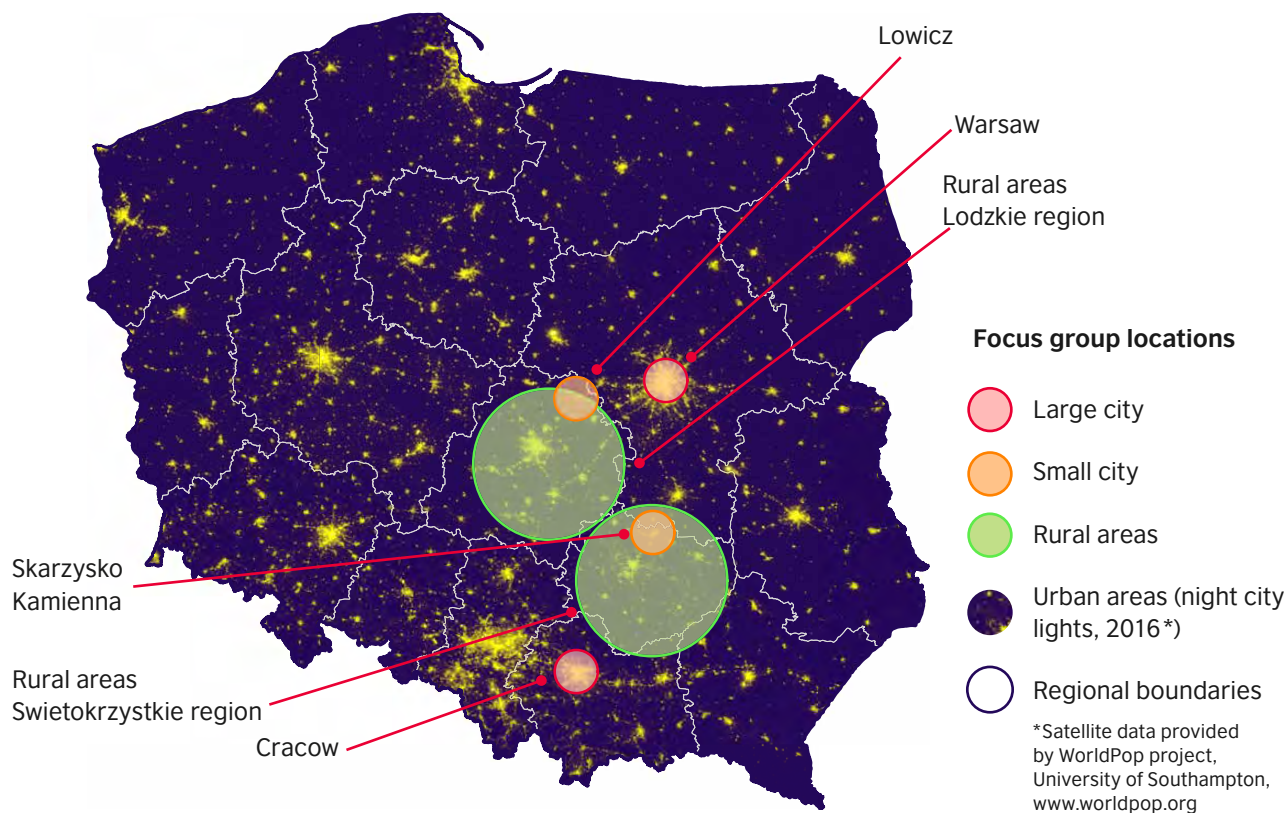
The Next Generation Survey was conducted using the CAWI method – an online questionnaire filled out independently by the respondent – on the *Opinie.pl* panel between 25 August and 8 September 2020. The reported sample size is N=2,000 and is representative for the population of people aged 18–30 years old in Poland, with respect to age group, gender, size of settlement and education. The survey represents the views of a diverse range of respondents, gender-balanced, living across different geographies (urban and rural) and with varying levels of education and income. The median interview was 22 minutes.

A challenge that emerged during the fieldwork was conducting the survey among men aged 25–30 years old, living in rural areas and cities with fewer than 50,000 residents, especially those with lower education and elementary vocational education. This group was less responsive than the total population. Fewer responses were received from this group than one could expect from the population structure. Therefore, during the data analysis stage, data was weighed additionally to reach the intended structure. The demographic structure of the sample was provided in table form with detailed answers to all questions, cross-sectioned according to the structure.

Focus group interviews

A total of 12 FGIs were conducted, each lasting two hours, with a combined total of 92 participants. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all the focus groups took place online. Each group was facilitated by two moderators based on a pre-prepared guide. The recruitment criteria were designed so that they reflect the socio-geographic variation of every group, as follows:

- size of the place of residence:
 - large city (more than 500,000): two locations – Warsaw and Cracow
 - small city (fewer than 50,000): two locations – Lowicz and Skarzynsko Kamienna
 - rural areas: two locations in smaller towns from the Lodzkie region and from the Swietokrzyskie region. During the recruitment we made sure that none of the locations are solely commuter satellites to a larger city
- two age groups: 18–24 and 25–30
- higher education and elementary or secondary (general or vocational) education
- working, studying and those neither working nor studying.

Figure 1 Places of residence of FGI participants

The FGIs began with scene-setting, ground rules and a warm-up using Dixit cards,¹ before exploring:

- how younger people see themselves – participants were asked to imagine a planet inhabited by young Poles or to describe Poland to a stranger from another world
- what it means to have a good life and what the challenges are – participants were invited to share their views on Mentimeter² and the responses were explored further by the moderator, and followed by questions about achieving life goals, barriers faced, the role of education, living abroad, and a specific question to gauge perceptions of the UK
- their vision of the future and commitment to change – participants were split into two breakout groups and asked to imagine Poland in 20 years' time, future relations with other countries and with the EU, who is responsible for making change happen and how responsible and engaged they themselves felt in making change, what issues the government should address and the extent this support is needed

- their voice in the public realm and whether they speak with their own voice – participants were asked whether their voices are heard and whether they recognise anyone speaking with their voice about matters that are important to them.

Social media research

A focused micro-study was carried out looking at young people's digital engagement in civic, economic, social and democratic life, as well as their aspirations regarding influencing their community, the country and the wider world. As the online environment is often the first choice for younger people when self-organising, it enabled us to access information and insights which we would not be able to gather through more conventional research instruments. The research focused specifically on Facebook, which is used by almost 90 per cent of Poland's social media users (Hootsuite, 2020).

¹ Dixit cards are illustrated playing cards (taken from a French card game created by Jean-Louis Roubira). They were used in FGIs as a facilitation tool to prompt personal reflection and discussion among participants.

² Mentimeter is a digital app used to gather and present real-time feedback. Mentimeter was used during FGIs to gather feedback from participants.

We observed the posting of information about ongoing activity, events and communication between members and followers by young activists and movements in Poland. A total of 17 Facebook groups underwent a detailed observation between 15 October and 5 November 2020. We observed groups that were directed specifically at young adults, as well as general groups, in which a significant number of members were (or appeared to be) aged 18–30, and which touched on topics relevant to them. The study only covered groups that were visible in the Facebook search bar.

In our choices, we were driven by research among young people and we checked what groups were connected to fan pages of popular initiatives, and which groups come up when searching for specific phrases or topics. We aimed to research a diverse range of viewpoints, and consequently the sample frequently included groups with extreme views. The study focused on a varied spectrum of groups and took a qualitative, rather than quantitative, approach. We looked at activism among younger Poles and studied the patterns their activism took, to gain an understanding of the social and civic issues affecting young Poles and the changes they are hoping or expecting to see. We asked:

- What are the main areas of online activism in Poland?
- What topics do activists raise?
- What is important to them? What are their beliefs or presuppositions? What forms of action do they adopt?
- How do they talk about them? What emotions are engaged?

We carried out two research activities.

1. We identified important young activists and social movements using desk research and expert opinion from within the Stocznia team, as well as research on the popularity of different groups, and ensuring that people, groups or organisations selected for analysis were diverse in terms of their agendas (for example, a mix of liberal and conservative).

2. We analysed profiles of selected organisations, movements and activists, based on systematic review of the posted content (topics, discussions and reactions), allowing us to create a list of issues that are important to young people and what changes they expect in relation to them.

1.2.4 Research advisers

Academic Task Force

The Academic Task Force is a group of nine researchers working in Poland and the UK. Members bring a balanced spread of knowledge and expertise in academic and research practices, and represent a variety of fields, including social and political sciences, cultural studies, research into young people, migration, culture, urban studies, and psychology.

The Academic Task Force members offered advisory support and expert input during the Next Generation Poland research, attending three meetings: one at the start, one mid-way and one during the final stages of the project. By scrutinising and inputting into the research process, the Academic Task Force ensured rigour, provided sense-checking and brought fresh perspectives. Details of the members can be found in Appendix 1.

Young Advisers

The advisers are a team of young Poles representing a range of interests and causes, who provided a critical voice and young adult perspective on the research, as well as working with the research partners to create the recommendations contained in this report.

The six members represent a variety of groups, come from different geographical regions and have diverse areas of interest, from climate change and women's rights to democracy and the arts. The group took part in three facilitated meetings:

1. an orientation introducing them to the research and presenting the results of the Next Generation Survey
2. a session based on the FGIs to offer them an immersive insight into the research process
3. a final session in which they generated recommendations based on the findings of the research programme, which are reproduced below.

The involvement of young adults as advisers is indicative of our core belief in young people's right to have a say and influence decisions that affect their lives. This approach is in keeping with the ethos of Next Generation studies which always seek to foreground and amplify young people's voices in the research process, giving them a platform to influence policy and discourse at a critical time in their nation's history. See Appendix 1 for further details.

1.2.5 Assumptions, considerations and limitations

Assumed understanding of the Polish context

This report assumes a basic level of understanding of Poland's political, social and economic history and context, particularly its dramatic transition from membership of the Eastern Bloc to its post-communist ascension to the European Union during the last three decades. In 'Young Poles in context', right, we have summarised the most important milestones along this journey and offered some insight into the impact the transition has had on Polish society and the daily lives of young Poles.

The young adults who have shared their views during this research programme were all born in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union – their parents lived in and experienced communist Poland, but the 18- to 30-year-olds interviewed here have not. Instead, they have grown up in a transitioning society and economy characterised by relentless and unprecedented change. The findings should therefore be considered through this lens to best appreciate their meaning and significance.

Conducting research during the Covid-19 pandemic

The research was originally planned to incorporate extensive in-person interaction, both among the researchers and advisers and with the research subjects themselves during the series of FGIs. The programme began on the eve of the pandemic and the first phase of lockdowns in the UK and Poland. A contingency plan for online delivery was drafted and, as it became clear the pandemic was unlikely to recede within the timeframe of the research, the decision was made to move the programme online, leaving open the option of carrying out some research in person during the autumn of 2020, should conditions improve.



Young Poles have grown up in a transitioning society characterised by relentless change.

As the UK, Poland and much of Europe entered a 'second wave' in September, the decision was made to carry out all remaining research online. This meant that many of the people involved in this programme were not able to meet in person, and the situation also created new challenges in terms of facilitating FGIs and recruiting young adult advisers. Despite these unexpected challenges, the research team and advisers were able to meet frequently via video calls and kept in touch through email.

Working digitally also led to some improved outcomes – the academic advisers meeting together, whether they were in the UK or Poland, rather than in person with a smaller group in their respective countries of residence. Ultimately, all targets were met and we were still able to gather high-quality data to standards we would have expected if working with a mixed online and offline approach. However, readers should have the context of the global pandemic in mind when reading this report.

1.2.6 Beyond the research

In addition to the work carried out under the research programme, the British Council in Poland's team identified approximately 200 nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) working with and for young people and young adults across Poland. The organisations were approached and informed about the research, with a view to raising their interest in the process and gathering opinions and experiences related to their own work with younger people.

The British Council in Poland received positive responses from a range of organisations operating at local, national and international level, including the Centre for Civic Education, Polish-American Freedom Foundation, Foundation for Good Education, Youth Climate Strike, Association for Creative Initiatives 'ę', Erasmus Student Network, Eurodesk, Eurydice, Institute for Educational Research, Demagog Association, Love Does Not Exclude Association, Rural Development Foundation and Comenius Foundation for Child Development.

Interested parties were invited to join a stakeholder meeting in November 2020 to discuss the preliminary results of the Next Generation Survey. Attendees included Arte Ego Foundation, Cooperacja Foundation, Rural Development Foundation, Schuman Foundation and Love Does not Exclude Association, along with researchers representing the Institute for Educational Research. Further stakeholder meetings are planned for 2021, with a view to organisations supporting the dissemination of findings once this report is published.

1.3 Young Poles in context

1.3.1 The Polish context

Poland is a country of more than 312,000 square kilometres (over 120,000 square miles) with a population of over 38.5 million people, making it the fifth most populous country in the European Union. Its capital and largest city is Warsaw.

The Polish state is held to have originated in the tenth century, around the time of its adoption of Catholicism (Lukowski & Zawaszki, 2001). In the 1500s, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was established and became one of the most populous nations in Europe. After several centuries of decline and partition, Poland regained independence in 1918 but, during the Second World War, was invaded by Nazi Germany and then the Soviet Union, becoming a member of the Eastern Bloc and signatory of the Warsaw Pact until 1989.

Today, Poland is a representative democracy, headed by a president who is elected by popular vote every five years.

Growing up during the transformation

Today's young adults are defined in this report as those born between 1990 and 2002, the eldest having been born just after the fall of communism in Poland. This generation has come of age during a period of dramatic economic and political change.

On 1 January 1990, the Polish government introduced a far-reaching and radical economic reform programme, with the aim of transitioning from a centrally steered economy to a free market approach and privatisation. The changes saw Poland transform from a bankrupt economy to a liberal democracy, but the rapid and unpredictable nature of the transition had a dramatic effect on Polish society (Johnson & Loveman, 1995).

Shared experience of Soviet life, with its highly controlled systems, led many Poles to distrust and distance themselves from state structures. For many, this was a time of rapid growth and empowerment, characterised by increasing individualism and entrepreneurship. However, others – including the younger generation at the time – struggled to adapt to the demands of the new capitalist system and experienced disillusion, despair and helplessness.

By 1994, Poland had applied for membership of the European Union and joined NATO in 1999, but by the early 2000s, data from Statistics Poland shows that unemployment among those aged 15–24 had reached 40 per cent. Despite its successful accession to the EU in 2004, Poland remained one of the poorest countries in Europe and over two million Poles emigrated to other countries in the mid-2000s, with the largest numbers travelling to the UK and Germany – although this had the effect of reducing unemployment in Poland itself.

Following EU accession, Poland began to experience increasing economic prosperity and, as of 2019, had the sixth highest nominal GDP in the EU (Eurostat, 2020a), with what are considered high standards of living, by global standards.

Social change and civic engagement

When considering the findings below and examining the attitudes and perspectives of young Poles, it should be noted that definitions of social class in Poland differ to those in Western European, post-Imperial countries, and especially the UK. Under Soviet domination, discussion of class was banned, returning to public discourse only after 1989. There is some evidence of class differences in Poland – mostly attributable to differences in wealth – but this is still the subject of debate.



As such, we deliberately chose not to investigate class in detail during this research. Instead, we have focused on more clearly identifiable differences and markers – those of gender, age, educational level, employment status and geographical location.

Attitudes towards civic engagement also differ and should be taken into account when considering the findings and recommendations. New legislation, introduced from 1990 onwards, allowed for intensive growth of the third sector in Poland. The first years of the 1990s were marked by rapid growth in the number of non-profit organisations, with the establishment of over 20,000 organisations, increasing five-fold over the next 30 years to more than 100,000 active organisations (Gumkowska & Herbst, 2005).

However, the availability of formal opportunities for participation and volunteering has not necessarily translated into changes in attitudes towards civic engagement. Low levels of social trust among Poles became a new norm and the number of people involved in organisations reduced drastically, as evidenced by data from the European Social Survey. Until the mid-2010s, engagement remained much lower than average European levels (Podemski, 2014).

Recent developments and polarisation

Since 2015, Poland has been governed by the Law and Justice Party (PiS), who have pursued a conservative agenda which has seen immigration and the rights of sexual minorities becoming contested topics in Polish public discourse and is, according to some commentators, contributing to a growing ideological, cultural and geographical divide between the more liberal, urbanised North and West and the more traditionalist, religious and rural South and East (the *Guardian*, 2019, 2020a).

Parliamentary elections in 2019 returned the incumbents to power, while a closely contested presidential election during the summer of 2020 – mid-way through the Next Generation Poland research – also delivered a PiS member to power. Following news of a planned re-interpretation of the constitution which would result in a near-total ban on abortion, autumn was marked by the largest mass demonstrations in Poland since the uprisings that toppled the communist regime of the 1980s. Up to a million people were thought to have taken to the streets, led by the grassroots women's movement *Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet* (All-Polish Women's Strike) and defying a government ban on protests (the *Guardian*, 2020b).

In a recent poll, just under 15 per cent of young adults aged 18–24 and ten per cent of 25–34-year-olds stated that they had taken part in one demonstration, while less than ten per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds, and just over the same figure of 25- to 34-year-olds, took part in more than one. Over 55 per cent of 18- to 34-year-olds did not participate but said they supported the protests, compared to an average of just over 20 per cent saying they did not (Polityka, 2020).

At the same time, the declaration of so-called 'LGBT-free' zones in a number of towns across Poland led to condemnation from the European Commission (the *Guardian*, 2020c). The protests came to encompass calls for full judicial independence and greater separation of church and state, as well as wider support for the rights of women and sexual minorities, before the worsening impact of the Covid-19 pandemic led to an inevitable shutdown of activities. The constitutional changes which were the subject of the protests were eventually introduced in January 2021.

The *Next Generation Poland* research was carried out against this backdrop: over 2,000 young adults were surveyed before the protests and over 90 took part in FGIs while they were happening. This means that the developments were not reflected in the survey design, but were discussed by a number of participants during the focus groups. The idea of a divided Poland is examined further in the third chapter of this report, which explores differences in gender, age, education, employment and geography among the young adult population.

1.3.2 Previous research into young adults in Poland

A review of previous research was conducted in order to help frame, and provide context for, the analysis of the *Next Generation Poland* research that follows in Chapter 2. The following information is drawn from a wide variety of research not conducted by this team and is provided to better illustrate the context in which the Next Generation research was carried out.

Demography

In Poland, as in other post-communist countries, there have been significant demographic changes since the political transformation in 1989. On the one hand, life expectancy is increasing (from 1980 to 2018, it has increased by eight years); on the other, the birth rate has dropped significantly to a level which does not ensure generational replacement, meaning the number of births will be too small to sustain the current population level. As a consequence, the age structure of the population and the percentage of young adults is changing.

After a period of growth in the years 2000–10, which was the result of the post-Second World War ‘baby boomer’ generation’s children entering into adulthood, there has been a decline in the share of young adults in the population. In 2018, 18- to 29-year-olds constituted just under 15 per cent of the population of Poland.

Existing demographic studies show that even if Polish people started having more children now, a significant decrease in the country’s population would still be inevitable. According to Statistics Poland, in 2050, the Polish population will fall from 38.3 million to between 32.1 and 36.3 million. The demographic structure of the country will also change – the median age in 2018 was 41, and it is predicted to be almost 50 in 2050. Polish society will go from being one of the youngest in the EU to one of the oldest (Eurostat, 2020b).

Identity and social attitudes

Identity and attitude are important areas of exploration in the *Next Generation Poland* research itself. Previous research into these areas reveals that the current generation of young Poles is neither homogeneous nor united – their attitudes are diverse and polarisation exists (Boni, 2018). Research has found that there are five distinct ‘tribes’ among young Poles and that, across these groups, there is more division than unity (Brzowska-Brywczyńska, 2018).

The internet is an important space for young people, and they see no divide between the ‘real’ world and the virtual world – their experience of the internet is interwoven with daily activities (Batorski et al., 2018). Mental health issues are prevalent and poor mental health is fueled by worries and fears in relation to global and local issues (OKO Press, 2019). According to data from the Polish Supreme Audit Office in 2017, there is limited mental health support and infrastructure.

Discussion about gender and sexuality among young Poles has been characterised using three ‘dimensions’ of emancipation: how gender is discussed in schools, women’s emancipation movements, and young people struggling for freedom of expression in relation to different sexual orientations (Youth Observatory, 2020a). There is progress towards emancipation, freedom of choice and equality of rights, though all areas are facing increasing barriers as a result of emerging political narratives in Poland. Issues relating to gender, the growing subjective awareness of women and the rights of sexual minorities are gaining importance in public debate, but the issues continue to divide and polarise society, including the younger generation, as will be demonstrated by the *Next Generation Poland* research itself.

Family life and housing

Despite over 50 per cent of younger people still favouring the so-called ‘nuclear family’ model (CBOS, 2019), non-traditional family models are becoming more accepted among younger adults – relationships are formalised less often, and children are born later. Our own analysis of data from the European Social Survey reveals that over 80 per cent of young adults accept the idea of living with a partner outside of marriage.

The housing situation facing young Poles is challenging (Deloitte, 2019): homes are often unaffordable based on typical Polish salaries and difficult to access, which results in 60 per cent of 18- to 34-year-olds living with their parents, according to data from the European Social Survey. Consequently, young people in Poland are ‘entering adulthood’ later than previous generations in terms of the five criteria of maturity:

1. entering the labour market
2. moving out of the family home
3. running their own household
4. getting married
5. having a child (Wiszejko-Wierzbińska & Kwiatkowska, 2016).

As will be seen, the struggle for affordable housing is also borne out in the *Next Generation Poland* research, where lack of affordable housing ranked as the biggest challenge facing young adults today.

Education, employment and emigration

Since 1989 there has been a significant educational boom, leading to the development of a private higher education sector. At the same time, the value of higher education diplomas is decreasing. Significant trends relating to Polish education in recent years include:

- undergraduate and doctoral studies gaining popularity, while master's studies lose popularity
- continuing educational inequality – if young people's parents didn't attend university then they are also far less likely to attend university, while young people from higher-status families strive to secure educational advantage through prestigious education at elite schools
- a continuing 'brain drain' caused by emigration from some regions (Długosz, 2018).

The unemployment rate, according to the Labour Force Survey, stood at three per cent as of September 2020. However, the corresponding value for 15- to 24-year-olds stood at 13 per cent (Central Statistical Office, 2020). Fewer Poles emigrate, though young people are still relatively open to migration. Younger people in Poland rarely work while studying, and have a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship – findings that are echoed in the *Next Generation* research.

Poland, the EU and beyond

Young Poles are broadly pro-European, but they do not fully share the values they associate with the European community and feel more connected with the nation state than the EU. Young Poles are divided on support for the EU: on the one hand, there is a 'silent majority' that largely supports EU membership and, on the other, a 'determined minority' who are not in favour of European integration (Niemczycki, 2018). Research suggests that young people who support the EU find it difficult to define what the EU means to them, whereas eurosceptics present consistent and comprehensive arguments against EU integration – these views are most visible on social media.

Young adults tend to be optimistic about their own future. For the most part, they believe that they will live better lives than their parents' generation, although they also see a range of threats to the world and humanity.

According to data from Pew Research Centre in 2018, they fear Russia more than global warming and support close relations with the United States (Young Europe, 2017). Polish society shows a positive attitude towards people in the UK, who rank as one of the most liked nations. However, recent British Council research suggests that other Western states, such as Canada and Ireland, are seen by young Poles as more attractive and trustworthy than the UK.³

According to this research, the United States is considered the most attractive country overall to young people in Poland, followed by Spain and Japan, while the UK is in tenth place, below Ireland. While the UK ranks second for attractiveness as a place to study and joint fourth as a place to do business or trade, it is seen less favourably as a source of arts and culture (ranking ninth) or as a place to visit (ranking joint 14th). It does, however, rank first in demonstrating respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs, for its education system, and for valuing diversity.

Youth voice and engagement

Data from the European Social Survey reveals a low level of interest in politics among younger Poles, a low degree of involvement in political activity, and a lower sense of agency in comparison to older Poles. Data also reveals a low level of trust in others and in institutions: a study by CBOS (2019) revealed that while close family members and friends were trusted by over 90 per cent of Poles, 'people in general' were trusted by only 23 per cent. Young Poles favour online sources of information when compared to traditional media, but distrust social media. There is a low level of civic engagement, though this is growing slowly (CBOS, 2019).

³ The British Council's soft power perceptions survey, run every two years. (Publication forthcoming. See also www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/insight-articles/attractive-of-them-all).

One researched area of youth voice looks at young intellectual elites, who, through editorial offices of magazines and publishing houses, speak on public matters on behalf of a larger group of young people. Influential young intellectual elites are also common in cultural institutions, universities, research centres, the media and NGOs. Young intellectuals are reluctant to participate in politics – instead, their recommendations take the form of meta-political messages and ideas, which although important, may not be translated into practice (Kulas, 2018).

The fight against climate change is one of the clearest examples of young people's civic engagement, though the scale of these movements in Poland is still relatively small (Youth Observatory, 2020b). Youth climate movements are characterised by keeping distance from the world of politics, including scepticism towards the concept of a 'green deal' for Poland. Young people feel frustrated at older generations who they feel have neglected the climate issue. Young activists feel rage, anger and frustration about the situation, and think changing climate awareness is critical. Their fundamental values are telling the truth, acting now, and persuading and involving others – and they feel morally obliged to save the world. Young climate activists see the need to look for older allies because, in their view, they cannot make change alone.

The research that follows will explore the complex identities of young Poles and reveal a range of differences in their views and values. It will discuss the range of challenges and pressures facing this generation, from domestic issues in Poland itself – for example, in the housing market or the political system – to existential global changes, such as those relating to migration and the climate. These questions will intersect with themes such as equality of opportunity, the effectiveness of formal education, the benefits of emigration, and the rights of women and sexual minorities, to reveal a generation divided along multiple lines but united by an overarching aspiration for freedom and tolerance.

“

The fight against climate change is one of the clearest examples of young people's civic engagement.



Chapter 2

Main findings

Preview: Main findings

The research findings of the Next Generation Survey and FGIs have been organised under three broad themes.⁴

1. Experience and attitudes – aspirational optimists, facing new emotional and generational challenges

Young Poles are optimistic about their private lives and their own futures. They aspire to independence and financial security, satisfying work, strong relationships and good social connections. However, they experience undercurrents of emotional discontent and anxiety in the face of the complexities of modern life, and face a variety of challenges and limiting factors, including an education they perceive as inadequate, a lack of affordable housing, prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse, and a lack of job offers. The pandemic has led to further negative effects on their lives.

2. Engagement and outlook – digitally savvy, global citizens with mixed feelings towards Poland and the wider world

Young Poles are extremely comfortable operating in the digital realm. They feel connected to both their country and the wider world. They consider themselves to be more tolerant and progressive than previous generations, but they are pessimistic about their impact when it comes to domestic and global affairs. They are divided when it comes to the benefits of European integration, emigration and globalisation.

3. Voice, views and values – disenchanted democrats with polarised views

Young Poles feel they lack influence in the political and civic realm, but they hope for change. They are pro-democracy, but many feel disinterested in formal politics. They are polarised in their political, religious and social views and values. Despite this, they share a desire for more personal economic freedom, more public spending and more effective governance, which they hope will lead to a more tolerant society in future.

“

Young Poles are optimistic about their private lives and their own futures.

⁴ Note: The breakdowns presented in Figures 3, 4 and 6 to 11 do not always add up to exactly 100 per cent due to rounding

2.1 Theme 1: Experience and attitudes: aspirational optimists, facing new emotional and generational challenges

2.1.1 More satisfied in the private realm

Responding to the Next Generation Survey, just over 40 per cent of young adults report feeling **satisfied in their lives**, with the majority reporting significantly higher life satisfaction in their private lives than they do when discussing the public and professional domain. Highest satisfaction was expressed towards family (at just over 60 per cent), friends and acquaintances (just over half) and health (just under half). In contrast, under a third expressed satisfaction about their place in society and just one-fifth with their careers.

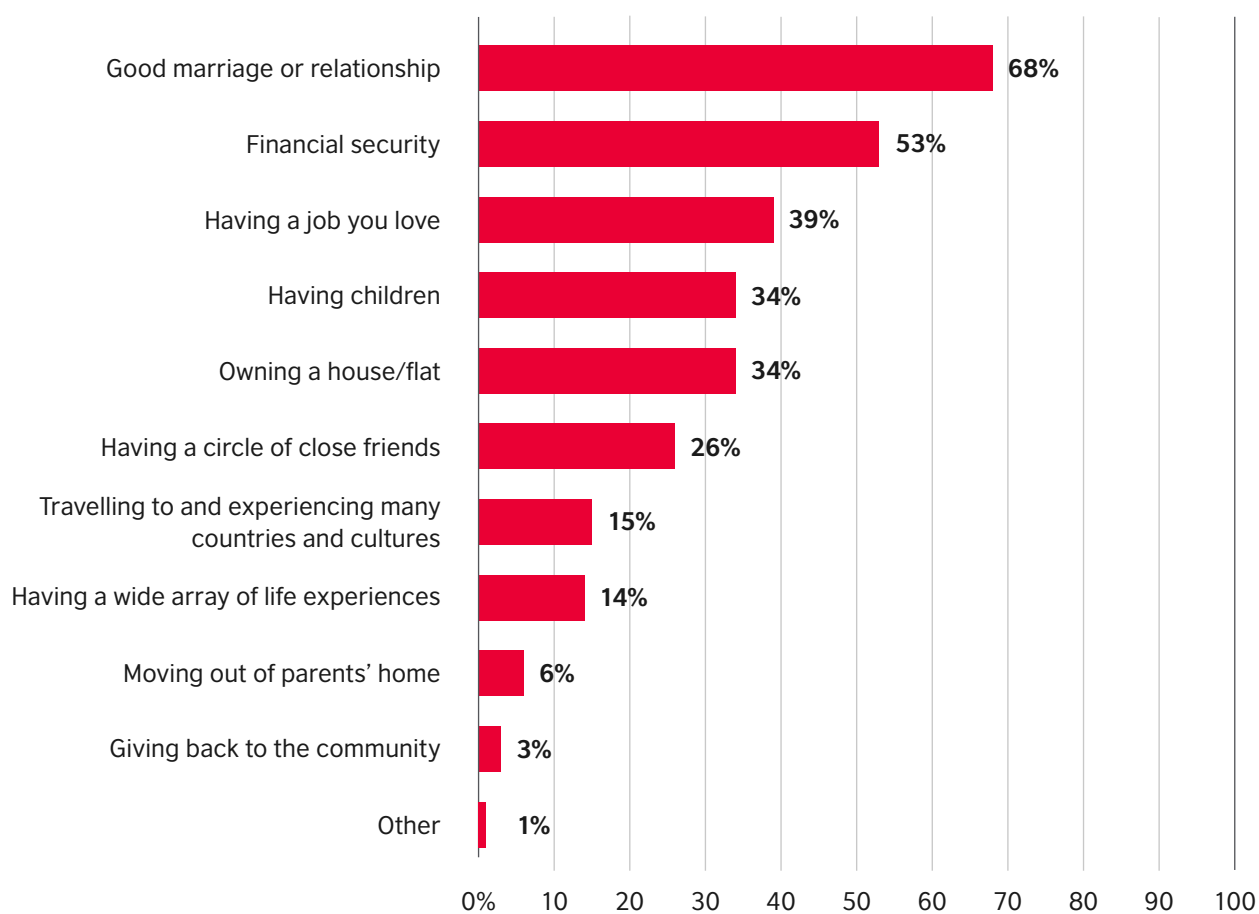
Over two-thirds cited a good marriage or relationship as the most important factor for a happy life, although the majority say they are not attached to traditional family models or gender roles, as evidenced in research by CBOS and the European Social Survey. Just over half cited financial security as an important factor, compared to less than five per cent who cited contributing to their local community.

“

Just over 40 per cent of young adults report feeling satisfied in their lives.

Figure 2 The building blocks of a happy life, as perceived by young people

Which of these factors are most important for happiness in life in your opinion? Pick a maximum of three that are most important to you.



2.1.2 Aspirational, self-reliant and flexible

Young Poles are **optimistic** about their own lives, opportunities and futures, especially when compared to their parents' generation, who they perceive as less motivated and progressive, which correlates with wider research on this topic conducted by PEW Research Centre in 2018.

Just under 75 per cent of respondents to the Next Generation Survey believe that their overall quality of life is better than the quality of life of their parents, especially in terms of their educational opportunity, personal freedom, health, income or career prospects. Meanwhile, 60 per cent of respondents stated that they believe the coming years will be very good or quite good for them.

A majority felt their life goals were achievable: over 90 per cent of respondents felt that having children was attainable, while over 85 per cent felt having a good marriage or relationship was within reach. Around three-quarters believe that financial security, foreign travel and a job you love are achievable, while just under 60 per cent felt that home ownership will be possible, compared to less than 25 per cent who did not.

Table 1 Attainability of life goals

Which of the following life goals are attainable?

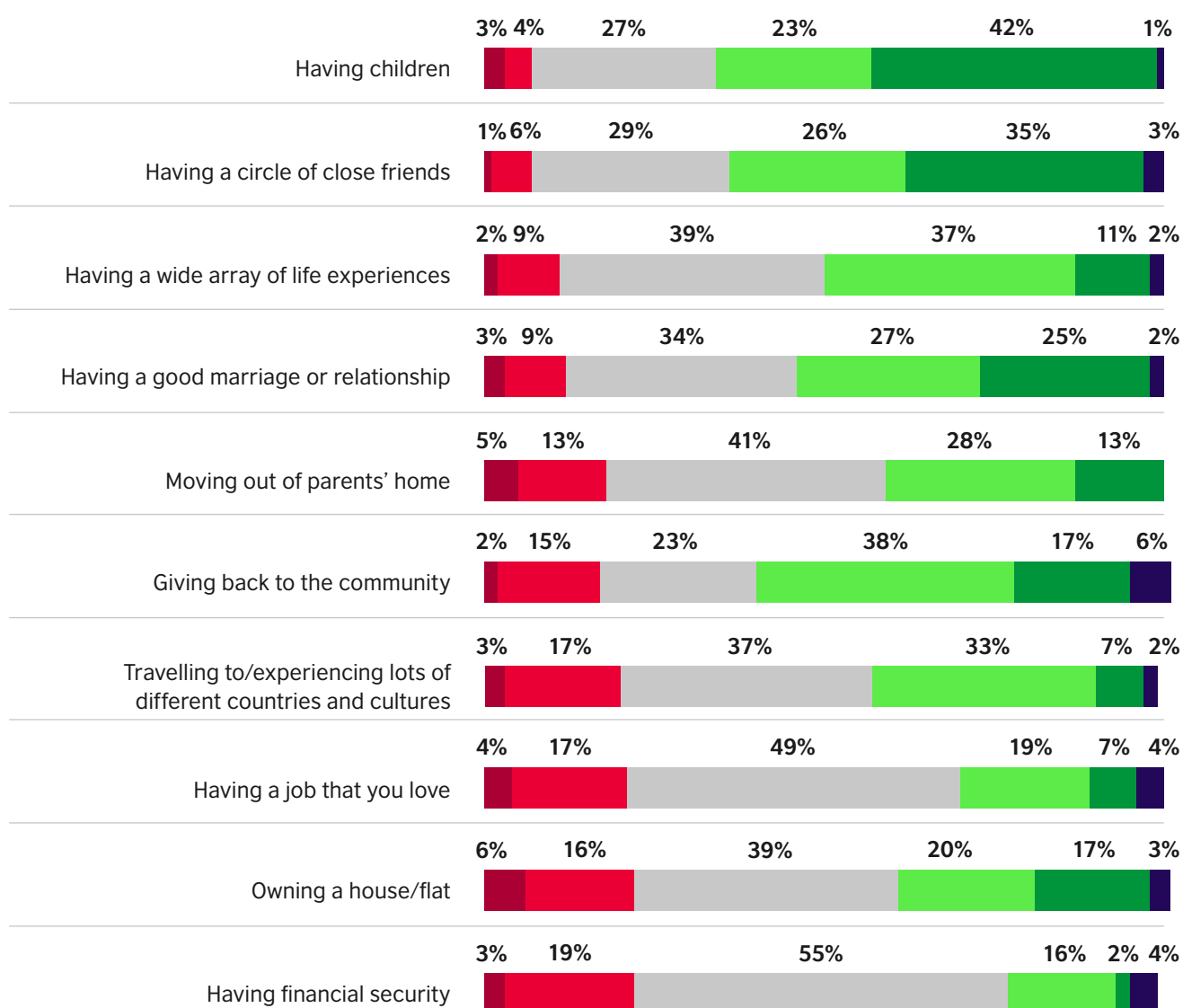
Having children	91%
Having a circle of close friends	90%
Having a wide array of life experiences	87%
Having a good marriage or relationships	86%
Moving out of parents' home	82%
Giving back to the community	78%
Travelling to/experiencing lots of different countries and cultures	77%
Having a job you love	75%
Owning a house/flat	75%
Having financial security	73%

“

Young Poles perceive their parents' generation as less motivated and progressive.

Figure 3 Key life goals and their relative attainability

How attainable are these things
for a person such as you?



◆ Definitely not achievable

◆ Definitely achievable

◆ Rather unachievable

◆ Already achieved this

◆ Rather achievable

◆ Hard to say



What young Poles deem important varies according to their current life stage.

Ambition, skill and hard work are seen as the **main factors for a successful life** by approximately 80 per cent of respondents. They see this life phase as critical to their future success and happiness: they believe it is important to find the right path but feel it is necessary to experiment, try different jobs and meet new people first. They do not identify as a uniform group, echoing recent academic research into young people's identities (Boni, 2018). They express differences in lifestyle, life choices, goals, values, worldview, financial situation and interests. What they deem important varies according to their current life stage and whether they have children or not.

Table 2 Main contributors to success

What are the key factors that contribute to success in life?

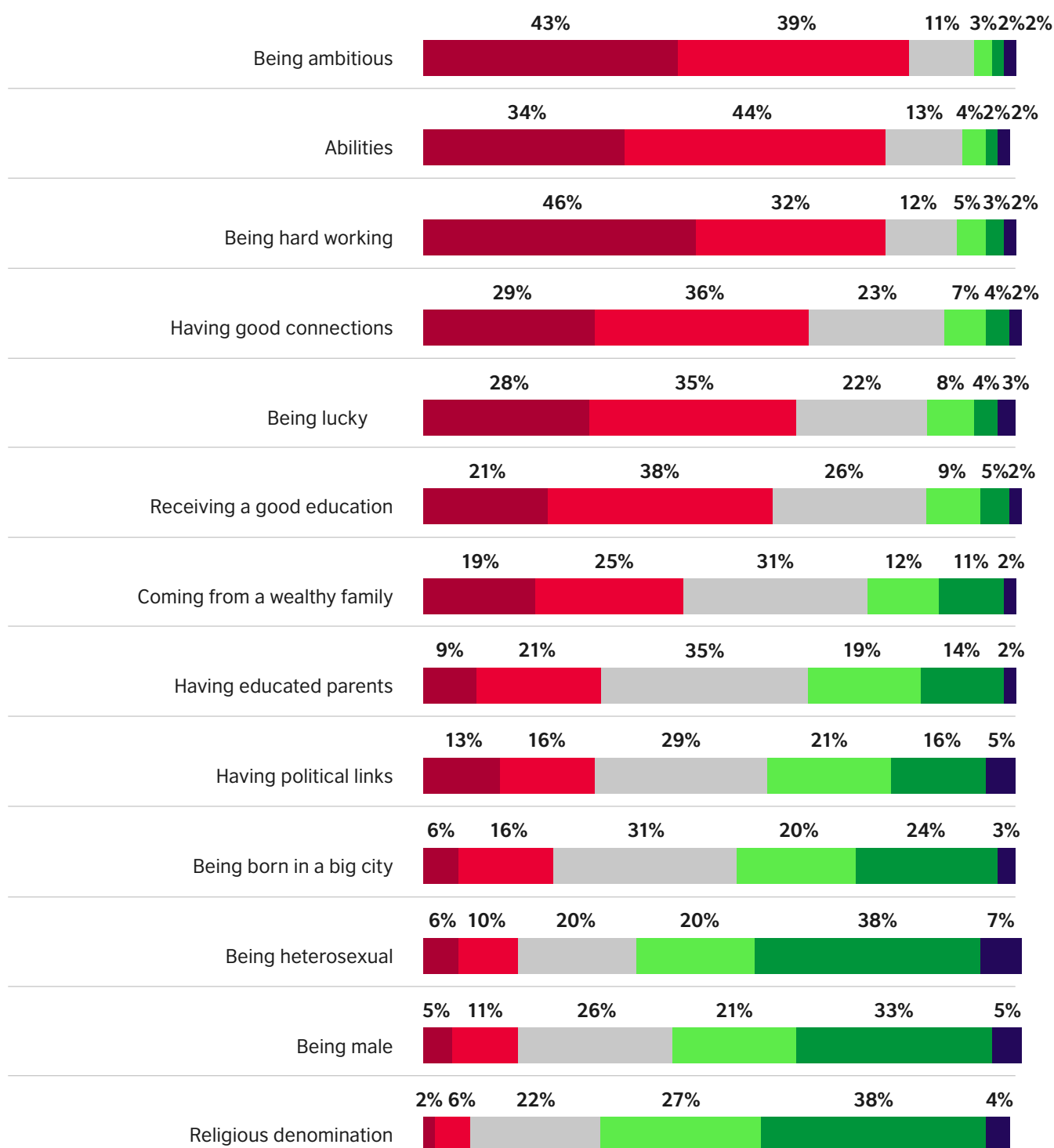
Ambition	82%
Your abilities	78%
Hard work	78%
Connections	65%
Luck	63%
Education	59%
Coming from a wealthy family	44%



Left Athlete at Wrocław Marathon, 2010

Figure 4 Main factors contributing to success in life and their relative importance

Listed are different conditions that some believe may be important for success in life. Please answer if you think they are critical, very important, moderately important, not so important or meaningless.



◆ Critical
 ◆ Very important
 ◆ Moderately important
 ◆ Not so important
 ◆ Meaningless
 ◆ Hard to say

Focus group participants expressed a strong sense of **agency** with respect to shaping their own lives and futures. Younger ages and those living in big cities with higher education tended to be the most optimistic, valuing motivation and perseverance. Those living in smaller towns and rural areas, and those facing greater financial challenges, also expressed that if you work hard enough you can achieve your goals.

Respondents expressed a flexible view of how their life might turn out – they perceive a range of opportunities and pathways, rather than a singular model or way of life. In their view, you take responsibility for what your own life looks like – and they believe this is a fundamental freedom. Importantly, these choices cannot be imposed on them by other people, especially not older generations. Even those pursuing a more ‘traditional’ path accept that others may choose to live differently to them.

“

I think that the most visible attribute is that young people are so bold nowadays, they are always looking for their path in that boldness. Even if they have a plan, they are fine changing that plan in the whim of the moment, they are not afraid of new things either, they are very bold and open-minded.

FGI 6, 18–24, small city, still in education

“

This is a time when you can try out lots of things, see what’s what. Whether you like something or not. For example, this is the time for changing careers, trying various job positions and various sectors. You can try to change course.

FGI 1, 25–30, large city, higher education, working



Spotlight



Achieving happiness and success

The following factors determining success and happiness were identified among focus group participants:

1

Attaining independence and a basic level of financial stability

Money is seen as the means to achieving **independence**, though not as a key to happiness in itself. Young adults want to be able to pay their bills, have some disposable income, and be able to survive without a job for a period of time, if necessary. Many would like to be able to buy their own home.

Older respondents and higher earners have higher expectations compared to those living in rural areas and those doing lower-paid jobs. Those who are wealthier or more financially secure more often describe financial status in terms of large purchases and luxury goods, while those in less favourable financial situations focus more on clothing differences.

Over half of participants interviewed consider themselves middle class, defining class in terms of wealth, education and profession. One's regional background and upbringing were seen to be an important factor for having a good start in life, with many citing a tension between balancing your own aspirations with those of your family, as well differing perceptions of people from urban and rural areas (explored further in Chapter 3).

2

Availability of and access to satisfying work

While all focus group participants felt work was an important driver of happiness, they broadly fell into two different groups.

The first group feel that work is an important **source of fulfilment** that must align with one's passions and potential in life, enabling growth and giving purpose, as well as providing important benefits such as comfortable working conditions and healthcare. This segment described boring, routine jobs in very negative terms. This view was prevalent among those with higher education and those living in large cities. Some young adults that were yet to enter the job market stated they were unable to find a job that met their expectations.

A second segment see work principally as a **source of income**. These respondents value a steady income and greater stability over interesting work or personal fulfilment. Many still emphasise the importance of a good working atmosphere with friendly co-workers. Respondents in this grouping tend to have a secondary or vocational education and live in smaller towns and rural areas. However, whatever their background, as respondents get older, they become more pragmatic and are less likely to talk about work in terms of passion and fulfilment. Those who had started their own family saw this as their primary source of fulfilment in life.

Spotlight: Achieving happiness and success

3 Strong relationships and social ties

All groups talked about personal relationships with partners, family and friends as important drivers of happiness, providing safety and support, a sense of belonging and preventing loneliness. Again, respondents could be separated into two broad camps which appear to correlate with wider research on young people's identities (Brzozowska-Brywczyńska, 2018).

- Those who focus on having a satisfying **relationship and good friends**, for whom family ties and starting one's own family may be less important – again this grouping tend to live in big cities and have higher career aspirations.
- Those who see **family** as primary, providing stability, safety and support, who value frequent intergenerational meetings and traditional celebrations, and who intend to have children themselves if they do not already – this grouping are more likely to live in smaller towns.

4 Other factors

A small number of people mentioned the importance of good **health**, although mental health – which has been the subject of wider research recently – was not mentioned in the FGIs. Others talked about **having a passion** beyond work as an important source of personal satisfaction, for example making music or travelling. The majority actively participate in culture and consume entertainment.

Giving to causes is also common – the Next Generation Survey found that over half of young adults make donations to charities, humanitarian, religious and environmental organisations, and educational institutions. However, during the FGIs only one group – those neither working nor studying – talked about **volunteering or helping others**, which they described in terms of generating 'good karma'. These respondents tended to be living at home and were being supported by parents while weighing up career paths, perhaps affording them time and capacity to volunteer and help others.



Left Football supporters watch KGHM Zagłębie Lubin vs LKS Łódź in the Polish premier league. Lubin, 19 June 2020

2.1.3 Emotional discontent and complex challenges

Despite an overwhelmingly optimistic outlook on their own lives, young Poles clearly experience undercurrents of **emotional discontent and anxiety** when navigating what they see as an increasingly complex reality. Less than half of young adults who took the Next Generation Survey reported feeling positive emotions on a regular basis.

Shame regarding financial issues was reported by over half of respondents, and over half also reported being treated unfairly, either based on their age or their views, a response that was especially common amongst the younger age group. Respondents feel that there is more pressure on them to navigate their reality than on previous generations, and that older generations do not understand this. They feel they must make an extensive range of difficult decisions from a young age and not all feel prepared for this.

Indeed, the sense of individual optimism and desire for independence described above is countered by a number of **challenges and limiting factors** that might prevent them from achieving their goals.

“

We suddenly need to face the world that's surrounding us. It's a very grown-up world and I think it's hard for many people. Many people just waste their life a bit, because they make the wrong decisions.

FGI participant, 18–24, small city, still in education

“

I think that in these times, you can be whoever you want. Which is great on one hand, but on the other hand, not everyone has an idea about what they will be doing.

FGI participant, 18–24, small city, still in education

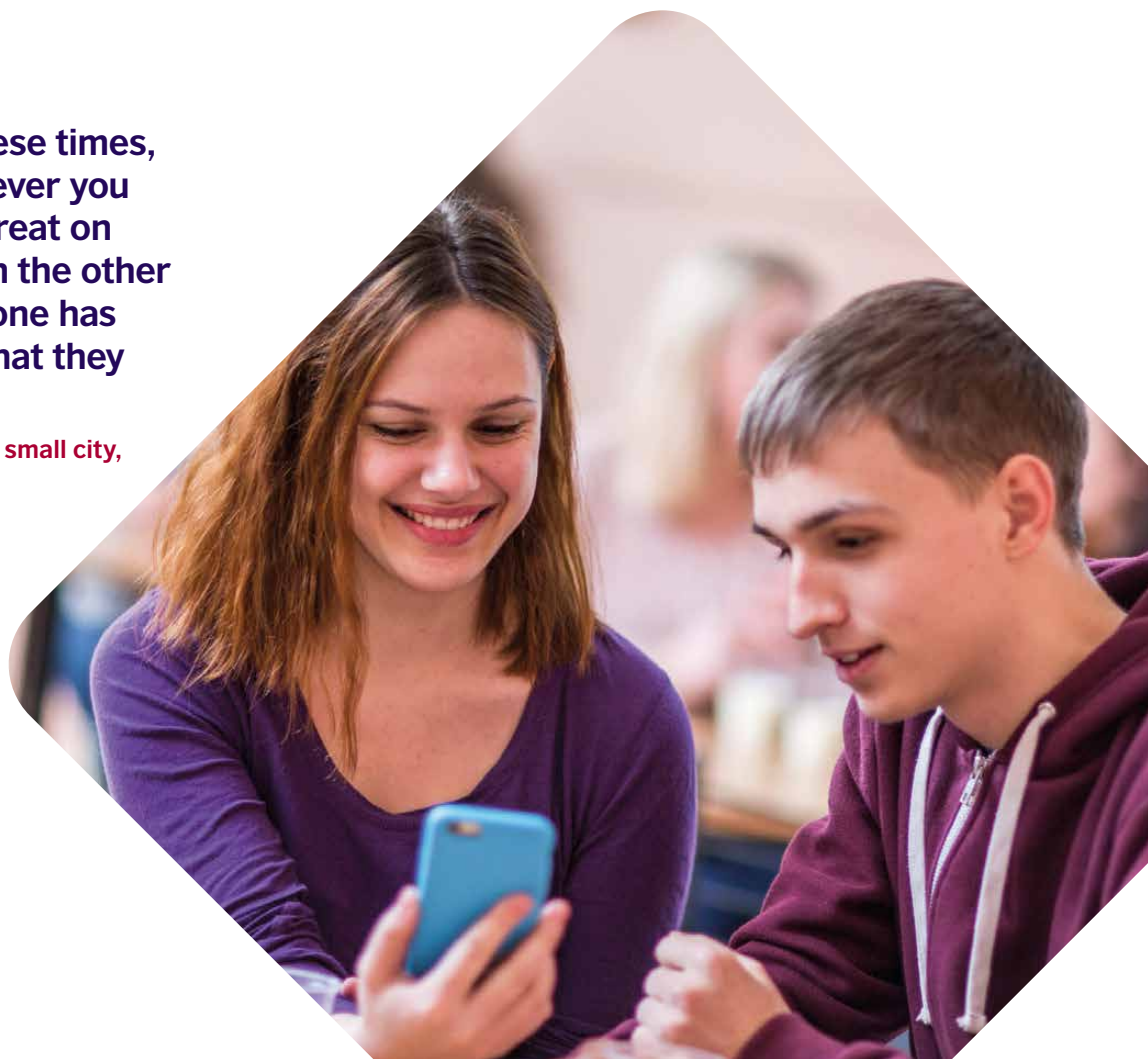
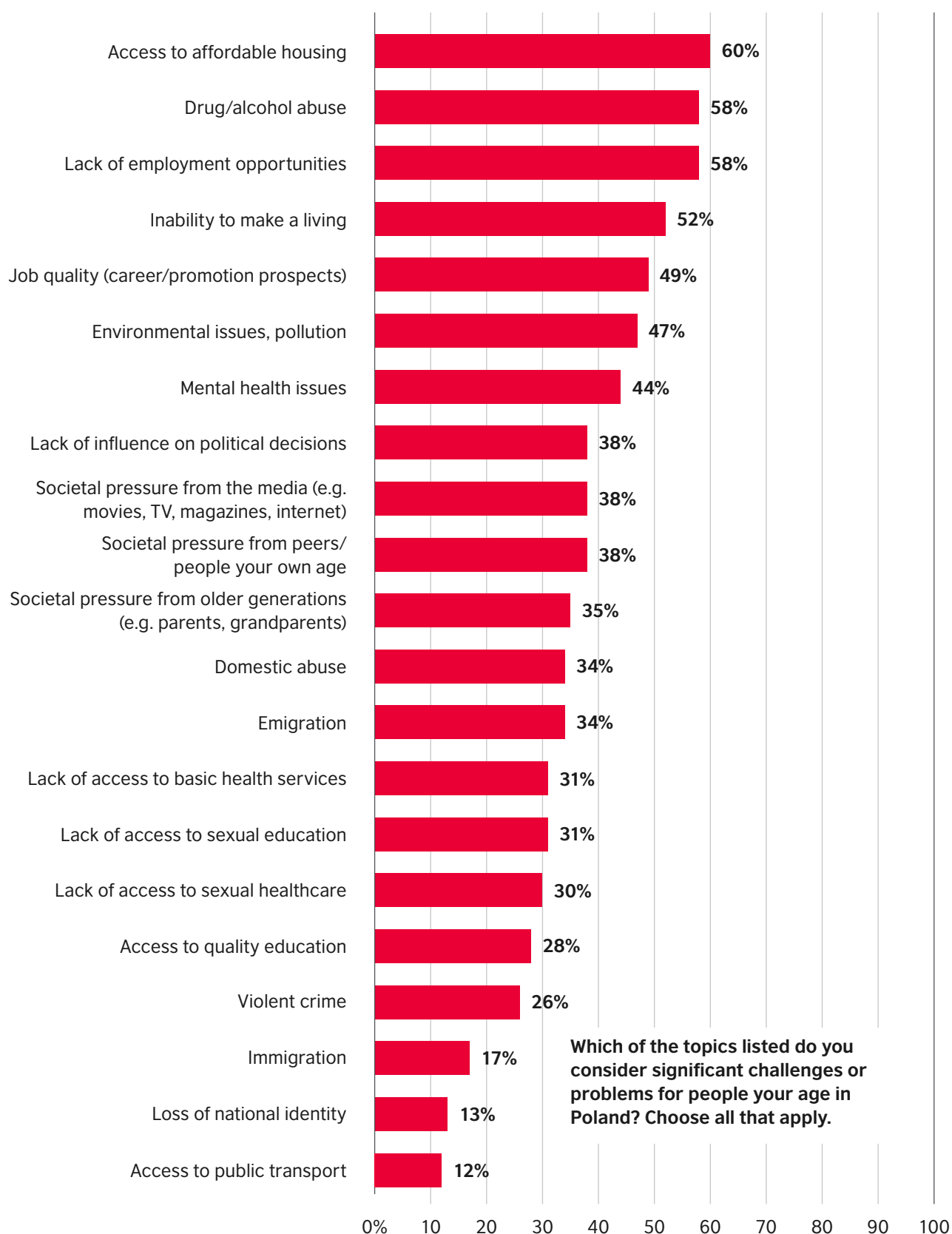


Figure 5 Significant challenges or problems perceived by young adults in Poland

On average 60 per cent of young adults cited the biggest problems facing their generation as a lack of affordable housing, alcohol and drug abuse, and a lack of job offers. Women see a broader range of challenges than men, highlighting issues with access to medical care, a lack of sex education, lack of psychological support, addiction, a lack of job offers and promotion prospects, financial challenges, social pressures, domestic abuse and environmental issues.

When it comes to having their own place to live, many young adults cite high rents, low wages and difficulty accessing credit. Others fear they will not achieve their goals of independence without parental support. This appears to echo the wider picture for young adults in Poland, 60 per cent of whom live with parents until their 30s, according to data from the European Social Survey.

They also worry about job security – they tend to set high expectations for themselves which can be difficult to meet, particularly for those in higher education and living in large cities. There was also a concern about reconciling professional and personal goals, such as raising a family, with some believing this could be unachievable. This appears to lead to a certain amount of pressure and feelings of self-blame when optimistic expectations are not met, resulting in anxieties about being ‘overtaken’ or left behind, particularly among those living in rural areas.



Everything is hard today, school, work, self-growth, training – it’s all hard now, so you need to work twice as hard at it.

FGI participant, 25–30, large city, higher education, working

Meanwhile, the **Covid-19 pandemic** triggered mixed reactions ranging from boredom and loneliness (around 40 per cent of respondents) to enjoyment of spending time at home (just over 35 per cent). The pandemic was raised by participants in all 12 focus groups, usually citing its negative impact emotionally (generating anxiety and anger) and financially (loss of stability and security).

Participants voiced being afraid of losing their jobs or not finding work, and perceived a loss of independence and personal freedom, for example due to social distancing and lower activity levels. Those living in rural areas felt worst hit, feeling cut off from normal life and losing income due to reductions in public transport restricting their access to nearby economic centres. Health was mentioned less often, but concerns were expressed with regards to the Polish health service’s capacity to care for those with more serious illnesses.



Before this situation with Covid there was a certain [ability to realise a person’s goals], but currently I’m less certain, because there are scares about a financial crisis and other matters ... we will see how it will be.

FGI participant, 25–30, rural area, secondary/vocational, working/still in education

2.1.4 Under-prepared by education

The majority report feeling **unprepared for life by their education**. The Polish education system is perceived to be too rigid and overly focused on theoretical teaching, rather than providing what are seen as useful skills and advice needed in the job market, for example starting a business, completing tax returns, creative problem solving and foreign languages. Young adults also want training in a range of life skills and social skills, for example mortgage advice, sex education, relationships, managing stress and career guidance. Those who had received a vocational (or technical) education were the only group who felt equipped for their working lives. Wider research has found that master’s studies are losing popularity – perhaps reflecting a growing desire to enter the job market sooner (Długosz, 2018).

Despite this overwhelmingly negative view, some respondents mentioned personal experiences that were more positive and some felt that Polish education is of a high standard, versatile and reliable.

“

The education system is definitely ineffective, because they don't have any ways in which they help young people find their way later in life.

FGI participant, 25–30, large city, higher education, working

“

School doesn't teach us at all how to connect, how to function in relation with others. We don't have any basic, psychological information on this topic, and I think that school is the place where we should be learning that. Not everyone learns these things at home, and it shows later on.

FGI participant, 18–24, small city, still in education

2.2 Theme 2: Engagement and outlook: Digitally savvy and globally minded, with mixed feelings towards their country and the wider world

2.2.1 Globally minded and digitally literate

The majority of this age group are **globally minded citizens** who embrace open borders and international travel. They feel they live in a different reality to people older than them: one that is centred on technology and digital engagement, a finding borne out in wider research on young people's online engagement (Batorski et al., 2018). Their worldview is no longer shaped by a dominant news outlet or medium, and the internet and social media make it easier for them to compare themselves to their peers around the world. They perceive **new opportunities in the digital realm** that they believe their parents or grandparents cannot conceive. However, it should also be noted that they feel less attached to the virtual world than they perceive those younger than them to be.

Social media is the most popular source of information, while traditional media are used by less than a quarter of the younger population. Over 75 per cent expressed distrust towards sources of information and believe fake news is an issue, which is in line with data collected by Eurobarometer. However, they feel they have the skills to critically evaluate information and don't believe everything they hear or read, preferring to cross-reference multiple sources and come to their own conclusions. Despite this, some respondents bemoaned the lack of reliable information on offer.

“

Some older people keep thinking about life being better all these years ago. Our picture is different. Because we're a democracy, because the borders are open and because there's internet, television and the like ... we have a different perspective on the surrounding reality than others.

FGI participant, 25–30, secondary/vocational, working

“

I'm sure we've all been there – you hear something, then it turns out to be nonsense ... One research says this, another research says that. Because of such situations, our generation has become quite suspicious and we need to check things thoroughly before we believe them. We need to see ourselves to actually believe something.

FGI 10, 18–24, small city, NEET



2.2.2 Connected to their country but lacking influence

Young adults feel a closer **connection to Poland** than to their regions or towns. Over 65 per cent feel proud to be Polish (particularly proud of Polish history, the landscape, cuisine and patriotism), but a majority also report feeling like they don't belong anywhere and very few are proud of developments since 1989.

They generally believe themselves to be **more tolerant** than previous generations – a feeling that transcends age, gender and geography. They are open to change and feel they can adapt to the volatile world they live in. They also believe they are more independently minded than previous generations: they are ready to challenge the status quo and, if necessary, to undermine it. They are not concerned about being judged by others and are able to fight to defend their views – a finding that resonates with the time the focus groups were conducted, which saw mass protests across the country.

However, there is a prevalent belief among 80 per cent of young adults that they have **little impact and influence** on government, institutions and corporations. They are more likely to believe they can affect people they know personally, such as co-workers, friends, parents or guardians. In the year before the survey, only seven per cent participated in a protest and only 25 per cent stated that they had signed petitions. Only five per cent had contacted politicians in local or central government. The survey suggests that less than five per cent of young adults have run for office or registered with a political party, while over 75 per cent rejected the idea of being actively involved in politics in future.

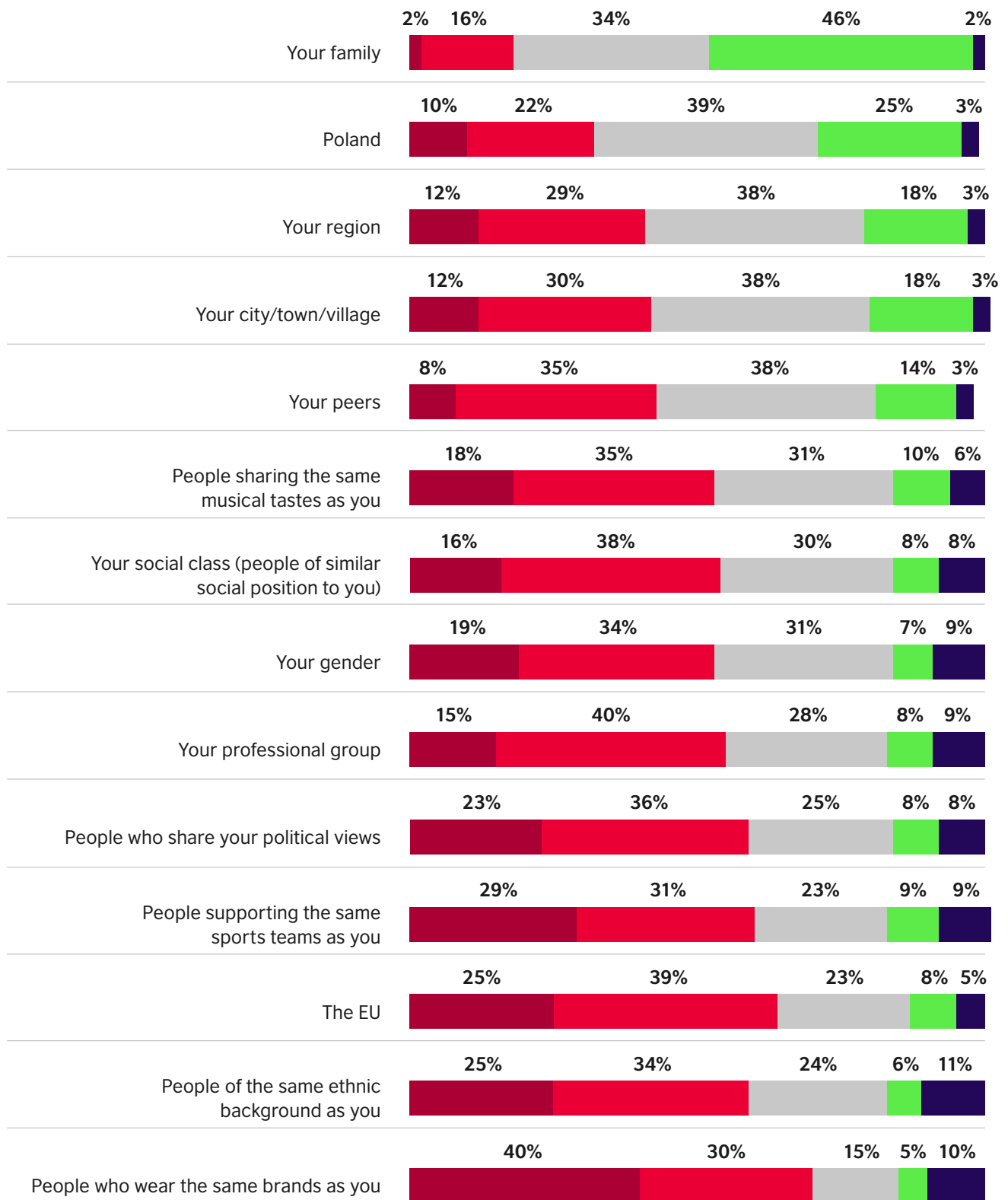
2.2.3 Pessimistic about domestic and global affairs

Despite their individual optimism and global outlook, the majority are **pessimistic about the future of Poland, the EU and the world**. A little under two-fifths of respondents believe the coming years will be good for Poland or the EU. Less than 15 per cent are optimistic about the future of the world. Younger respondents tended to be more pessimistic than their older counterparts. These findings are in stark contrast to young people's stated optimism about their own lives and futures (see above).

Left Women protest in Wrocław. The poster reads 'Poland is a woman'. 23 October 2020

Figure 6 Young people's sense of connectedness

How strongly, if at all, do you feel connected to ...



◆ Not at all
 ◆ Not so much
 ◆ To some extent
 ◆ Very much so
 ◆ Hard to say

The European Union

Feelings of connection to one's peers, one's town or region, and to the EU were weaker among survey respondents compared to feelings of connection to Poland, despite 65 per cent being in **favour of EU membership** and further integration, and only 15 per cent against. Co-operation with the EU was seen primarily in terms of economic benefits, which were generally held to be positive (echoing wider research across the population into perceptions of the EU, conducted for Young Europe in 2017).

As well as direct financial support, the advantages of being part of a larger economic block that could compete with other economic powers were highlighted. Freedom of movement across open boards was largely seen as positive and advantageous.

Many believe that further integration will lead to greater tolerance, openness and progress. These groupings value the legal protections afforded by membership (for example, protections for sexual minorities), and some feel that the interests of the wider European community should be placed above those of individual countries. Women were more likely than men to be in favour of further integration. However, only a small number of survey respondents believed Poland occupies a strong position in Europe.

On the other side of the debate, some expressed that they felt EU membership was not profitable and that Poland is paying in too much money, for example to bail out countries like Greece. There were sceptical voices regarding the Euro, which some felt would raise prices and lower living standards.

Some feel that Poland is not treated as an equal partner by larger countries such as Germany and France. Even when broadly in favour of membership, those on this side of the debate perceive a threat to Poland's autonomy and believe the EU should not interfere with Polish policies and laws, or impose standards for education or equal opportunities. These respondents fear losing their Polish national identity, traditions, history and language. Some expressed anti-migrant and anti-refugee sentiments. Men were more likely to perceive threats of membership and to support greater autonomy.

A further group of respondents opted for the middle ground, believing that it is important to reconcile the interests of both sides of the debate. This position became somewhat more problematic when attempting to reconcile competing views on migration or the rights of sexual minorities. However, most participants on both sides were opposed to the idea of withdrawal from the EU.

Emigration

A substantial majority (70 per cent) would consider **emigrating for work**, particularly to Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, Norway and the US. Several focus group participants were actively considering leaving Poland to work abroad, with the most common motivation being better financial prospects, although it was felt that this is currently not attractive enough for many people. Cultural exploration and personal reasons were also cited as motivations to leave.

Barriers to emigrating include close ties to family and wanting to start a family in Poland. Some who had already worked abroad and returned expressed that they had missed Poland, their friends, the landscape, the ability to communicate in their native language and a sense of belonging. Perceived challenges in the destination country include cultural differences or discrimination, language barriers, and diminished financial prospects due to the relative strength of the Polish economy in recent years.



Prospects are better abroad ... For example, Poland doesn't have that flair, as in, nobody wants things to look beautiful. Here, things need to be functional, always on a budget. Obviously, the salaries in the West are so much better. I have been abroad already, and I loved it, felt better than in Poland. You feel bolder there because the people are more positive. That's why I felt better.

FGI participant, 25–30, large city, NEET





“

I remember being in Germany, visiting my brother. I liked that country! But you start missing Poland after some time. The prices are also becoming the same. As for the salaries, they have gotten so similar. I can make the same money in Poland and in Germany, only in Germany I'm all alone.

FGI participant, 18–24, large city, secondary/vocational education, working

As described, social attitude surveys have found favourable views towards the British among Poles. However, focus group participants expressed a range of differing opinions about **emigrating to the UK**. Many felt the UK was somewhere earnings are high, and where temporary migration enables people to save money to be used back home later. The standard of living was also perceived to be higher. Other drivers for emigrating to the UK included knowledge of English and the presence of a large Polish diaspora community.

However, many felt that emigrating was no longer as economically beneficial as it used to be, pointing to a high cost of living (meaning saving would be difficult) and an overcrowded job market. There were also concerns about being treated with less respect. While some thought the UK's multiculturalism was a clear benefit, others expressed misgivings, associating diversity with crime and a lack of security. The weather and its impact on mental health was also cited as a reason not to emigrate to the UK.

The UK's exit from the EU was widely seen as a cause for concern amongst survey respondents, whilst in the focus groups, it was referred to only occasionally. Those who referred to it saw it as a sign of political and social instability. Others stated that the UK seemed to be 'burnt out' and in a 'mess'. Others saw Brexit as a symbol of Britain closing itself to the world and not accepting people from outside its borders.

“

The British do not praise their government actions either, especially now with this Brexit, right, as first everyone just voted to leave the EU and then protested that they did not really know what they voted for, because they were cheated by their government. They themselves are so politically unstable at this point that, for me, this is certainly no example of a good country in which I would like to live.

FGI participant, 25–30, small city, higher, working

“

I would not like to go to Great Britain. For me it is also a country that's already burnt out ... I am not quite comfortable with working in their mess. Although in Poland it is not better.

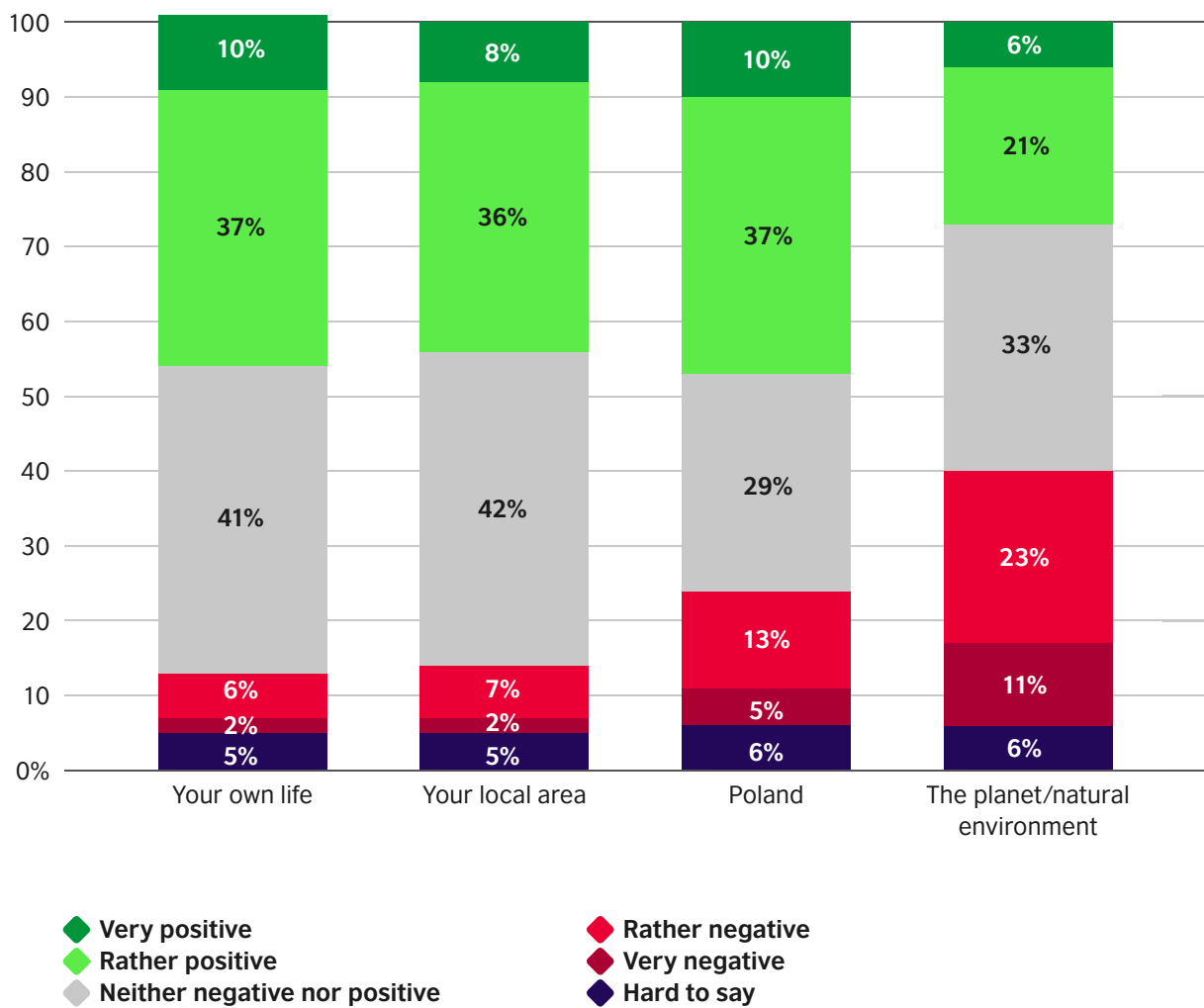
FGI participant, 18–24, small city, still in education

The global context

Young adults are divided over the benefits of **globalisation**. While almost half consider its effects positive, only a quarter believe it has a positive impact on the natural environment.

Figure 7 Attitudes towards globalisation reported in the Next Generation Survey

In recent times the world has become more interconnected. Money, people, cultures, jobs and industries all move more easily between countries. All things considered, do you think this has had a positive or negative effect on ...



Right Protest against restrictions on women's rights. Poznan, September 2016



Climate change was the most commonly cited **global threat** by survey respondents (just under 40 per cent), followed by economic instability and military conflict (just under 25 per cent), surveillance, nuclear weapons, growing social inequality and the spread of disease (all just over 20 per cent). It should be noted that only focus group participants from big cities mentioned climate change. Wider research indicates that the scale of climate advocacy in Poland is still relatively small, despite engendering strong feelings in those who are engaged (Youth Observatory, 2020b). Young adults are least worried about energy shortages, artificial intelligence, the state of democracy and overpopulation.

Table 3 Key challenges reported by young people

What are the greatest global threats we face (multiple choice)?

Climate change	38%
Economic instability	24%
Military conflict	24%
Mass electronic surveillance	22%
Nuclear weapons	21%
Growing social inequality	21%
Spread of disease	20%
Automation and mass joblessness	18%
Fake news	18%
Global terrorism	17%
Mass migration	13%
Population growth	11%
The state of democracy	11%
Artificial intelligence	10%
Energy scarcity	5%



Micro-study



Digital activism among young adults

To better understand young Poles' online engagement and participation, additional research was conducted on **digital activism**. Given that Facebook is the most widely used social media platform among younger people in Poland, the research focused on 17 Facebook groups, all of which underwent detailed observation for one month between October and November 2020.

The study only covered groups visible in the Facebook search bar. Good representation of various viewpoints was sought, which means the research includes some groups who displayed extreme views. Six groups are exclusively for young people, whereas others include significant numbers of young people. The groups are described in more detail in Appendix 2.

Young people's groups

1. Young political activists (2,200 members, mostly students).
2. Liberal-minded young people (800 members, mostly students with liberal and LGBT+ connections).
3. Young libertarian nationalists (1,000 members, politically affiliated with a right-wing nationalist and eurosceptic profile).
4. Young liberals (2,000 members, pro-European and liberal).
5. Young politicians (200 members, local activists).
6. Young anti-fascists (3,700 members, anti-nationalist, anti-racist, inclusive).

All ages, including significant numbers of young people

7. Self-help group for all (107,000 members of all ages, Covid-19 support focus and over 150 regional sub-groups).
8. Group for young climate activists (2,100 members).
9. Climate change for all group (1,200 members of all ages).
10. Political climate change advocacy group (11,800 members of all ages).
11. Everyday climate protection group (35,500 members of all ages).
12. Education reform group (700 members, public group focused on education reform).
13. Equal rights advocacy group (1,600 members of all ages, supporting the rights of LGBT+ people).
14. Anti-LGBT+ group (6,700 members of all ages, ostensibly researches 'culture and spiritual heritage' but mostly focused on anti-LGBT+ and anti-abortion campaigning).
15. Women's rights advocacy group (100,000 members, supports reproductive rights of women).
16. Anti-abortion group (700 members, subsection of a Catholic anti-abortion group).
17. Covid-19 sceptics group (17,100 members who believe Covid-19 is a conspiracy).

Micro-study: Digital activism among young adults

Key areas of online engagement and activism

Political activity

Most youth-targeted or youth-initiated groups are linked to politics, rather than wider causes. Examples include youth wings of political parties, but also youth groups with specific political views or associated with formalised youth politics (members and supporters of youth city councils – optional local government bodies that provide auxiliary, advisory functions). Administrators of these groups are young people, often working actively in either the parent party or the youth council. The groups themselves are often connected to the fan page of the parent party or a youth organisation (groups 2–4).

Youth wings and grassroots groups are usually responding to current events, laws or decisions by the government that they believe are controversial or inconsistent with their views. Their posts are focused on discussion but may also include a call to action: to pass on information, sign petitions, write open letters or invite people to participate in a strike.

Climate protection and sustainable lifestyle

We observed a large amount of advocacy relating to the climate crisis. Young people belong to groups that are active across various levels, from individual responsibility (for example, mutual help in switching to cruelty-free cosmetics, groups propagating zero waste – see group 11) through to those advocating for systemic changes (groups 8–10). Many young people belong to several climate-related groups at the same time.

Protecting and advocating for human rights

Human rights groups are most likely to advocate for protecting the rights of women (especially the right to abortion – group 15), the rights of sexual minorities (group 13, but also

partially group 2) and those standing against fascism (group 6). When there is not a specific youth group for a certain cause, young people evidently join intergenerational groups instead.

Preserving or promoting traditional values

Traditional groups most often tend to advocate for the anti-abortion movement and support for traditional family models (groups 14 and 16).

Covid-19

Groups have emerged questioning government decisions about the Covid-19 pandemic (usually pointing to negative economic impacts and limitations of personal liberties).

Support groups

While popular with other segments of the population, there are few support or self-help groups targeting young people.

What actions do members of the observed groups adopt?

Systemic changes

Most observed groups are aiming for or expecting **systemic change**. Environmental protection groups present the most radical attitudes; their members perceive both grassroots and top-down actions as most important for saving the planet. Their goal is changing the government's policy towards sustainable development and transforming the economy, while also preventing social inequalities and introducing widespread climate education. Group members are aware that to achieve something, they need to undertake actions that will draw the attention of the public to them. For this purpose, groups 8 and 9 organise protests and marches, educational campaigns, and they participate in the Warsaw Climate Panel.

Micro-study: Digital activism among young adults

A similar approach to change is displayed by groups advocating for human rights. Actions expressing dissatisfaction with the ruling party are led on a grassroots level by the groups' members: they organise **protests** and lead **online actions**, such as letter writing in support of protestors and recording anti-government songs. There is also an online form of protest called an 'online blockade', which involves flooding the mailboxes of right-wing politicians with emails of dissent. To support the protests, mobile phone apps have been developed with advice on how to be safe and keep others safe; how to behave when you are apprehended by the police; and where to go for legal assistance.

The situation is different with groups focused on youth **political activism** as they don't take direct action. Their actions are largely peaceful or educational, with most taking place on social media. They often undertake actions aimed at the people in government, for example, writing letters or petitions to the governing politicians. There is high level of **consultation** with members before decisions are made.

Groups focused on organising youth politics (groups 1 and 5) strive to boost **young people's voices** in politics and give youth councils greater potential to act and make political decisions within their region. For this purpose, they are striving to **update laws** governing the functioning of youth councils. To achieve that, they are first and foremost directly contacting MPs, and signing letters and petitions.

It seems that what differentiates youth political activists from the political party youth wings is motivation: political activists want to create tangible change, whereas political party youth wings attract people with corresponding ideals and values.

Changing attitudes in society

A large segment of the groups expects changes in society in relation to the issues they are fighting for. This is especially important for the groups fighting the climate crisis, for human rights and for traditional values; these groups see **changing attitudes** as instrumental to instigating systemic change. To bring about a shift in societal worldview, the groups mentioned take actions in the public space intended to draw attention to the problem: they take to the streets for marches and demonstrations, and create stickers and posters. An interesting type of activity among these groups is peer-to-peer mentoring; for example, a mentor who helps someone switch to a lifestyle that is beneficial for the planet. Some political youth groups also promote entrepreneurship among younger people.

Conclusions

Our wider research suggests that many younger people in Poland feel disengaged from political and social issues. It is relatively uncommon for younger Poles to participate in social media activism groups, and membership of the groups observed does not provide a representative sample.

However, the findings give an indicative 'snapshot' of the political and global issues attracting most attention, engagement and action from young people in Poland at this time. In FGIs, we heard young people express that protest is one way in which they feel empowered and most able to influence political decisions, which is reflected in the type of action taken and promoted by online groups. When considering recommendations for increasing civic participation among younger people, the findings from this research point towards a range of issues that may generate interest and further engagement.

2.3 Theme 3: Voice, view and values: Disenchanted democrats with polarised views

2.3.1 Lacking influence in politics but hoping for change

Two-thirds of young adults are pro-democracy and the majority state they vote in elections. Almost 65 per cent declare that democracy is the only form of rule they want in Poland, and over half said it is important to them that Poland is ruled democratically.

At the same time, most (over 80 per cent) feel they have less influence on the social and political context than in their private lives. In focus groups, many reported feeling that politicians are responsible for Poland's direction and that they have little influence over politicians, other than through elections – although some felt elections have a very small impact due to a lack of real choice between viable options. Some felt that changes will only come about after a period of generational change, believing that older people – as the electoral majority – vote based on long-held convictions.

A large number of survey respondents expressed disinterest in politics, feeling that politicians are not interested in their lives. More than 65 per cent believe politicians do not address the issues that matter most to them (less than 15 per cent believe they do) – findings which echo previous studies into young

people's attitudes towards politics (European Values Study, 1999, 2017). Almost 45 per cent feel that they are not heard (compared to just under 20 per cent who feel they are), while over a third stated that politics is too confusing. Over half want to see gradual change, while around a third want to see radical change.

However, as described above, few reported being involved in political activities such as petitioning, boycotts, demonstrations or running for office – although it should be noted that the Next Generation Survey was conducted before the mass protests of autumn 2020 had begun. Indeed, by the time of the focus groups (which coincided with the protests), participants were expressing that participation and mobilisation are crucial to creating change, as well as challenging xenophobic, racist and homophobic attitudes publicly and among friends and family, by talking openly with those who hold opposing views. Some felt these actions would lead to profound change, while others believed they would be overlooked by the authorities as acts of opposition.



Two-thirds of young adults are pro-democracy.

Figure 8 Young people's view of democracy

How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically?

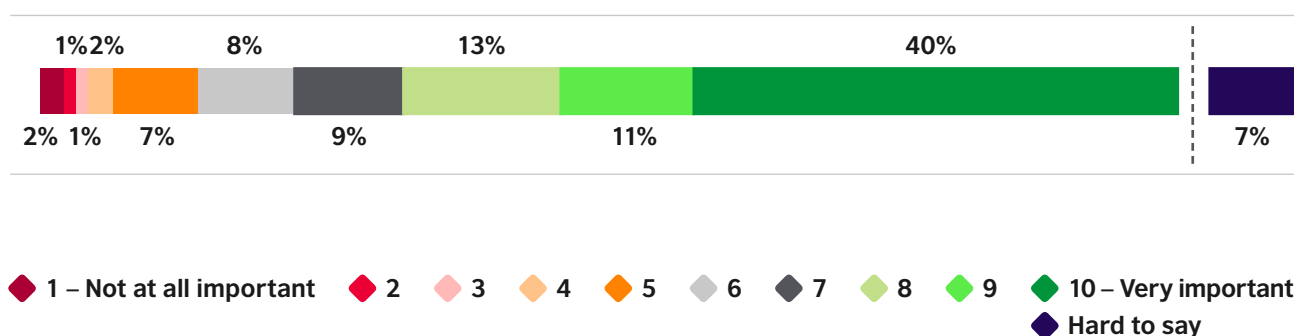
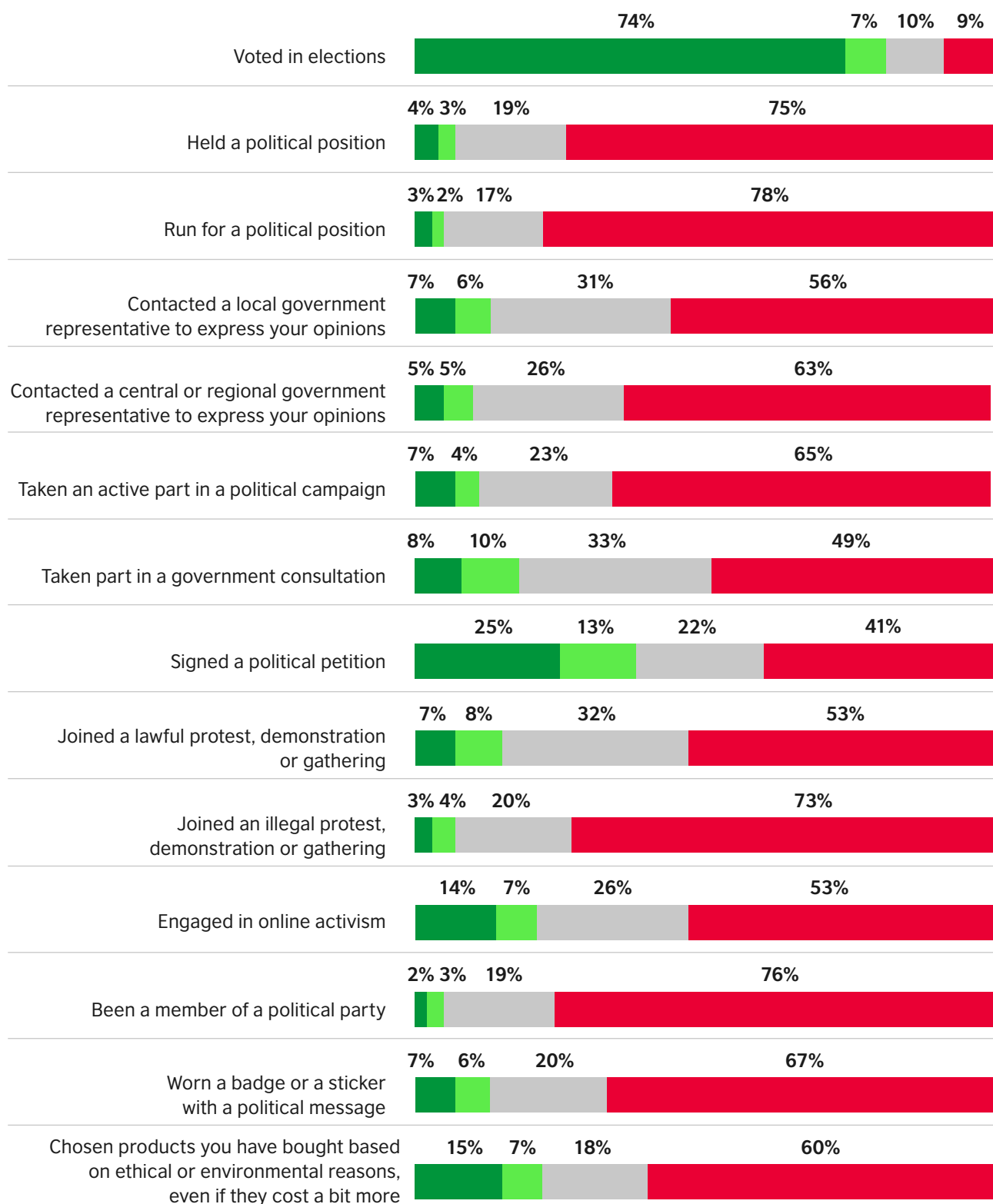


Figure 9 Young people's engagement in formal and informal political activities

For each of these activities, please indicate whether you have done any of these things in the past year, whether you have done it in the more distant past, whether you have not done it but might do it, or have not done it and would never, under any circumstances, do it.



I have done it in the past year



I have done it in the past



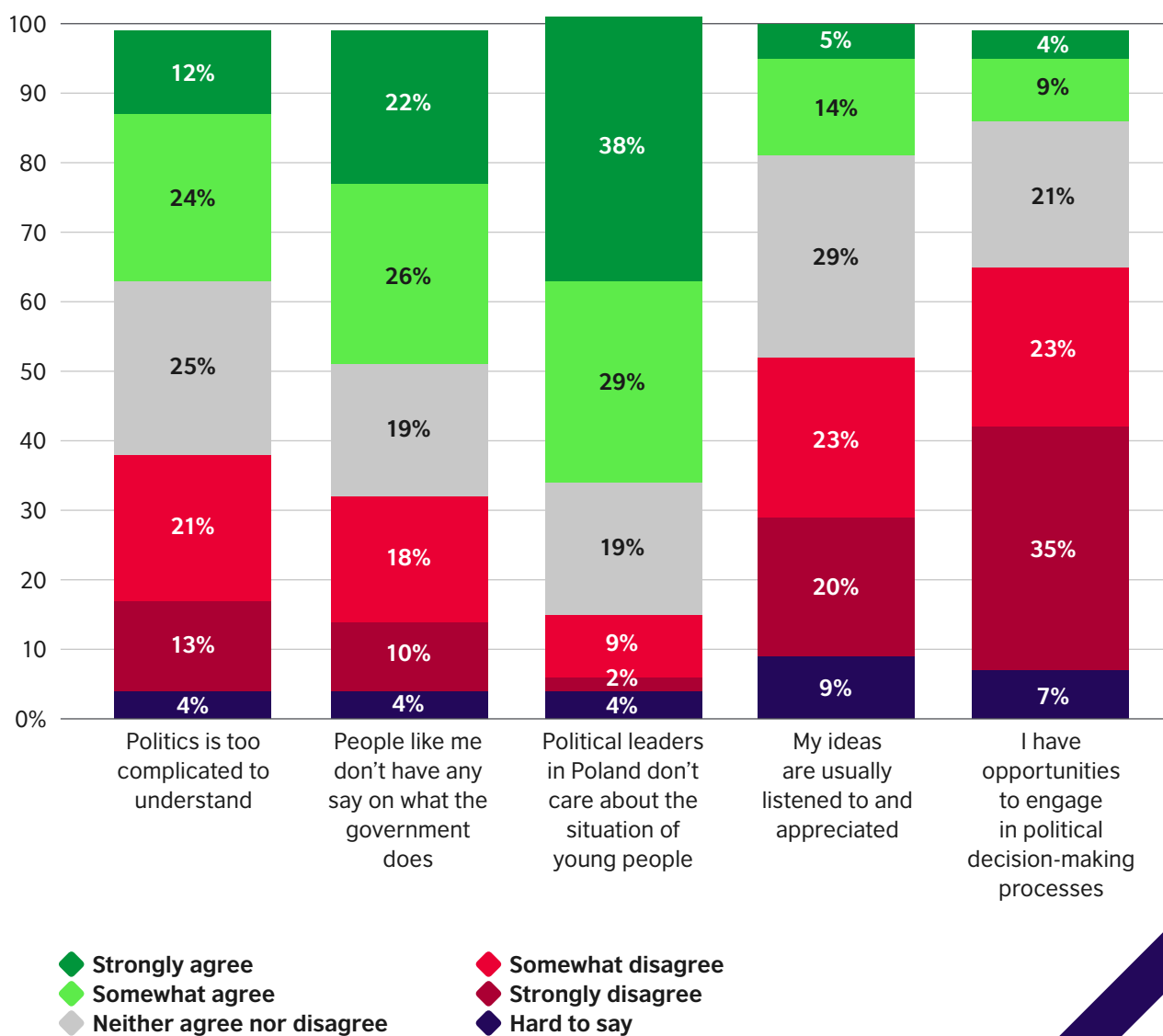
Never done this but could do it



Would never do this

Figure 10 Attitudes towards politics and politicians

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Those living in smaller towns and rural areas were more likely to believe they could influence issues in their local area, for example through participatory budgeting or local organising. Some feel that individual choices are the building blocks for change, for example recycling or charity work.

“

For example, these protests that are taking place, or the equality parades. Some young people don't approve, or go against it, or burn rainbow flags and stuff. Then there is also the other side, participating, trying to improve acceptance. The whole point is making Poland more tolerant and open. I think young people definitely vary on their political views.

FGI participant, 18–24, small city, secondary/vocational education, working

“

I think that when looking at the events from the past days, I noticed that not everyone agrees with the protests, but they are afraid to speak up. They are afraid how their communities would react. I have a couple of friends that were met with this extreme hate, just for saying they disagree with the protests. They were [rubbished] on social media for expressing their opinion. I had a case, several cases of people saying they are not that tolerant, but they can't say that out loud now, because it's no longer fashionable.

FGI participant, 25–30, large city, secondary/vocational education, working

“

The state should listen to the citizens and adapt to what the people are saying, because the people may be right. They should stop only thinking about themselves and instead they should look at all the people and consider what they all really need.

FGI participant, 18–24, small city, NEET

“

One thing that could help would be young, responsible politicians. To have a desire for voting, there need to be politicians we could vote for.

FGI participant, 18–24, rural area, secondary/vocational, working/still in education

“

Nowadays young people feel that they have a voice, they are not afraid to speak up. They are organising protests, and in good causes. Because it concerns them, not old people, it concerns *them*. And young people begin to talk about it and are not afraid to talk about it, as it was in the past.

FGI participant, 18–24, rural area, secondary/vocational, working/still in education

“

We can have an influence, if everybody unites, when everybody goes out on the street, maybe then they will wake up.

FGI participant, 18–24, small city, secondary/vocational, working

2.3.2 Polarised in views and values

Young Poles are **polarised in their political views** between left and right, but 25 per cent are not politically involved. A vast majority (approximately 75 per cent) of survey respondents identify as **religious**, but far fewer practise their religion regularly. Large numbers hold liberal views on matters such as sex education, while views on equal marriage and the rights of gay couples to adopt children are polarised. Despite an overall lean towards the left in the focus groups, a range of views and beliefs were shared. Many participants expressed a feeling that Poland is divided in terms of values, rather than along party-political lines.



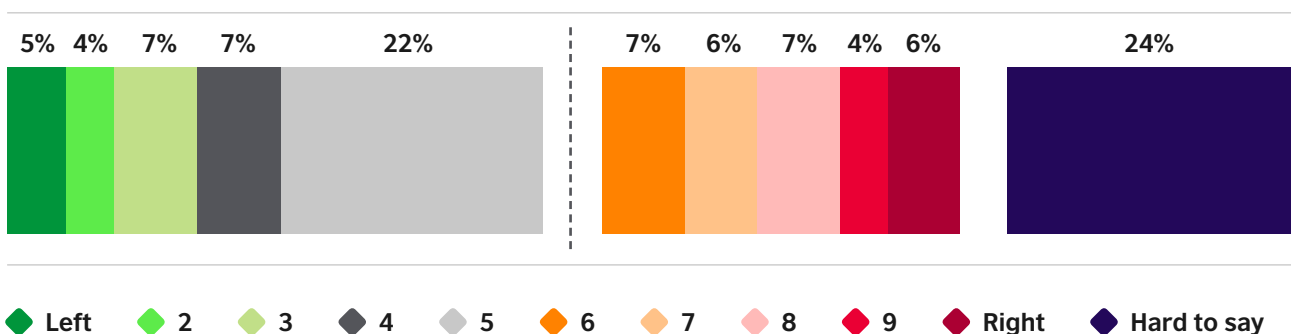
People are divided according to their worldview. People have more right-wing or left-wing views, you can see that on every step, that's what it's mostly about.

FGI participant, 25–30, small city, higher education, working

Although there was a strong lean towards liberal values and views on tolerance and women's reproductive health rights, when asked to list public figures with whom they identified, many respondents provided names linked to the 'conservative-moral' movement, for example members of the Confederation Party which takes an opposing stance on these issues. This may be due to social pressure experienced in the focus group setting, with those holding right-wing views not wishing to reveal their stance or face criticism from other participants, especially given the extent of the protests that were happening at that time.

Figure 11 Political alignment of young Poles

When discussing politics, people talk about the left and the right.
Where would you put your views on this scale?



2.3.3 Demands for personal economic freedoms and public spending

The changes called for by focus group participants also shed light on their values and standpoints. These fall under three broad categories, each of which was shared by a significant majority (unless otherwise stated):

Calls for a less regulated, low-tax economy with high standards of living and employment

Participants want a higher quality of life, more economic freedom and an increase in Poland's economic and military standing.

- Young adults want to see an improvement in people's standard of living and financial status. Many feel wages should be higher in proportion to the cost of living. Several participants expressed that there should be no inequality in terms of gender, age or geography, while some want bigger pensions.
- They want a more open job market which is accessible to all and where everyone can find well-paid work which makes them happy.
- They want lower taxes, less regulation and more freedom for businesses, particularly for small and medium enterprises, with minimal 'interference' from government. This appears to echo research showing positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship as a career path (Academy of Leaders, 2017).
- They want more goods to be made in Poland and for the country's international economic standing to improve. This was also seen as linked to a need for greater military power, with some mentioning a fear of armed conflict with Russia.



I'd like to live in a Poland that is quite liberal as far as the economy goes, where we have a simplified tax system, where entrepreneurship is properly fostered ... such things automatically impact my life. I just believe that it's the entrepreneurs that create most of our GDP.

FGI participant – no further information



I would first of all like to live in a Poland that has good international relations, a country that can fight for its state interests and a country respected by others in Europe.

FGI participant, 18–24, small city, still in education

Calls for changes to public spending and reform

Participants expressed a desire for better governance, smarter spending and more reform.

- Young adults want to see better use of public money. By this they mean more spending on healthcare, education and infrastructure (the latter being particularly important to those in rural areas and small towns). This includes reforming the education system so that it better prepares graduates for the current job market.
- There is widespread dissatisfaction with the social security system, which many perceive as unfairly weighted in favour of those in receipt of benefits. Some respondents feel that benefits should only be given to those 'actively trying to improve their situation', even in cases of need (for example, for disabled people).
- Many of those living in cities expressed during FGIs that they want to see decisive action on climate change. This issue was not discussed by inhabitants of smaller towns and rural areas.



Taxes are huge in Poland and we're getting nothing from them.

FGI participant, 18–24, small city, still in education

“

From my side I can say, and say it honestly, that I'm afraid of a climate disaster, with which nobody will do anything. And only us, young people, are taking a stance on this issue, while the people in charge are pretending as if nothing was happening, so far, in our country. Around the world the issue is considered more, but here, in Poland, it is dramatically neglected. I don't understand why it is still so.

FGI participant, 18–24, small city, still in education

Calls for greater freedom of choice and a more tolerant society

Participants expressed a range of views on societal issues, converging on calls for freedom and tolerance, but diverging when it comes to the rights of sexual minorities and migrants.

- Freedom of choice, particularly concerning a woman's right to have an abortion, was a major issue of concern (reflecting the themes of the concurrent mass protests). Respondents mostly want Poland to become a more tolerant country where people can follow their own personal and political convictions, and are not judged based on their sexual orientation or skin colour. However, some respondents expressed anti-migrant views, with specific mention of inward migration from Muslim countries. This view was expressed slightly more often by women and those from smaller towns. Conversely, women were overall more likely to express a need for more tolerance and freedom.
- Feelings towards the Catholic Church were mixed. Many feel that the church is influencing political decisions and expressed a desire that church and state interests be separated.

- Young adults expressed that they are not listened to and that they want the current political 'elites' to be replaced. They would like to see more referendums and more representation of voters' interests. They want politicians to be resourceful, good managers who are capable of achieving goals. They believe that for this to happen, a new generation – who grew up post-1989 and who are not 'burdened' by the previous systems – needs to take charge.
- Respondents want to see more kindness in Polish society. They feel that Poles do not trust each other and that this is being exacerbated by a polarising political discourse (as discussed above, there is extensive evidence outside of this research – for example from the European Social Survey – of low levels of trust across Polish society). There was a widespread feeling of tiredness with politics and how it is carried out, with calls for new social movements (on all sides), more polite political debate and more respect for each other's views, which participants felt would result in a more tolerant society overall.

“

We are more tolerant to various expressions of difference, be it sexual orientation, skin colour, or something else. I think that we, the young people, really don't care, you're just a human being ... but older people take issue with people who are different.

FGI participant, 18–24, small city, still in education

Right International Catholic Youth Convention during World Youth Day, Cracow, 17 July 2016





Chapter 3

Differences among young Poles

Further analysis of the Next Generation Survey data reveals important differences between contrasting segments of the young adult population. These findings could be used by researchers, youth organisations, campaigners and policymakers to better understand social nuances and channel their resources accordingly.

A range of different needs and voices emerge, for example between young Polish women and men, between the younger (18–24) and older (25–30) age groups, between those with lower and higher education and earnings, and between urban and rural populations.

Regional mapping also reveals a divide between a more liberal northern and western Poland and the more traditional and conservative southern and eastern regions. These geographical differences could inform further research and policy discussion at a local or regional level to ensure that programmes and policies are targeted in a more localised way.

3.1 Gender differences

The Next Generation Survey reveals that young Polish **women** aged 18–30 are more satisfied with life overall, and in particular with their family relationships (65 per cent compared to just over 55 per cent of men), but more often feel they don't know what to do with their life. They are more likely to consider higher education, hard work and skills, and coming from a big city as the most important factors for a successful life.

Young Polish women raise and acknowledge a broader range of societal problems than men and more often support charities. They were more likely to report social disadvantages stemming from Covid-19, and are more concerned about the spreading of disease. A majority reject the traditional 'nuclear family' model (compared to less than 50 per cent of men), are in favour of sex education and support the rights of sexual minorities. They are most proud of Poland's nature, landscapes and cuisine.

Women are more vocally democratic but are less likely to feel heard by politicians. They are more likely to be left-leaning and mostly favour EU membership. They are particularly concerned about climate change, automation and mass unemployment. In the focus groups, women were slightly more likely to express fears about inward migration from Muslim countries, despite being more likely to support further EU integration, embrace openness and express a desire for greater tolerance and freedom. Women place greater value in the legal protections afforded by EU membership (for example, protections for sexual minorities), and some feel that the interests of the wider European community should be placed above those of individual countries.

In contrast, young Polish **men** are more likely to feel proud of Poland than women, expressing pride in Polish history and patriotism. They are more likely to express concerns about loss of national identity and feel closer connected than women to Poland. Despite this, they are more likely to consider leaving Poland to work abroad.

Young Polish men are more likely to consider family wealth, parental education levels and political connections to be the most important factors for a successful life, and were more likely than women to report issues with employment relating to Covid-19.

They are more likely to be right-leaning and less likely to support the rights of sexual minorities. They feel they can influence government and corporations, and are more likely to feel heard by those in power. They less often declare that they feel closely tied to the EU, with over 40 per cent taking a pessimistic view of its future, compared to less than 30 per cent of women. In focus groups, men were more likely to describe threats of membership and to support greater autonomy.



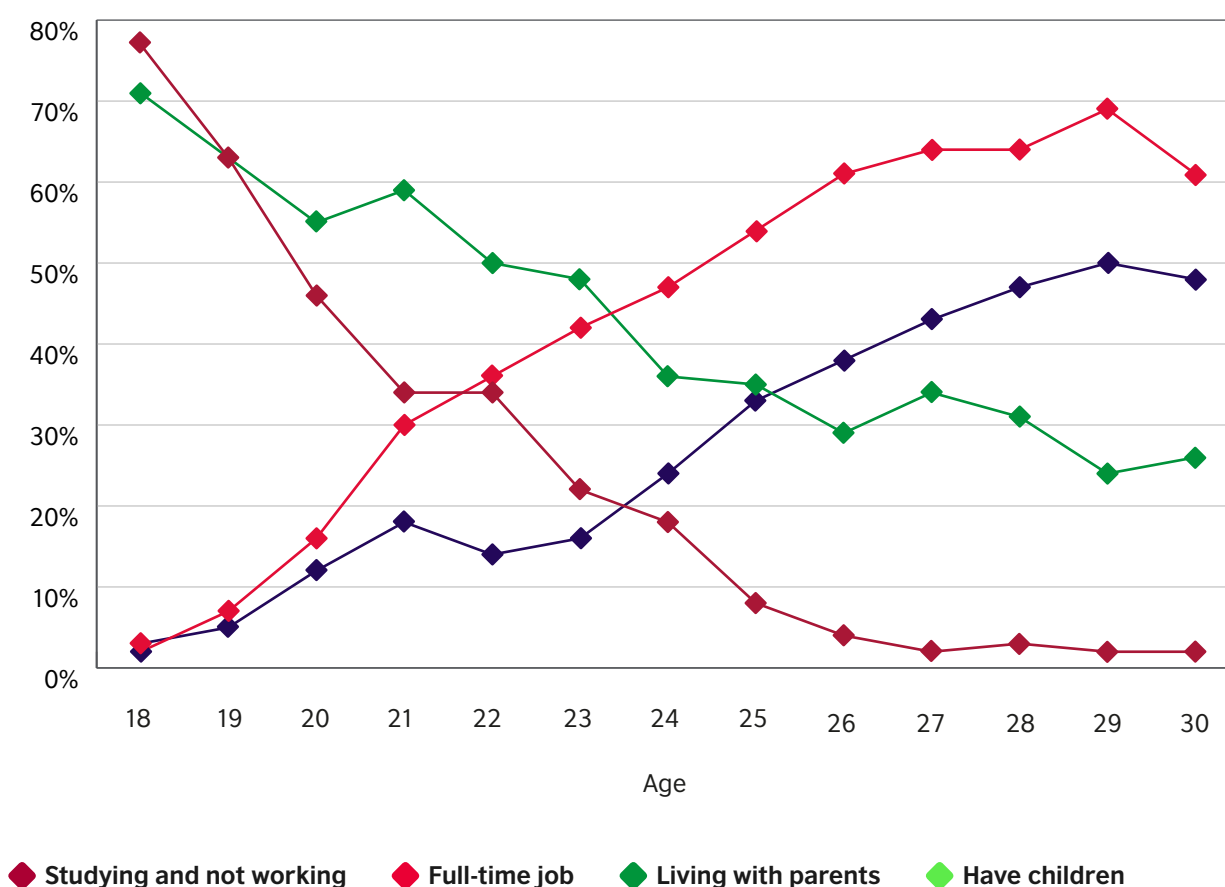
Left Supporters in the National Stadium during a qualification match for the 2014 FIFA World Cup. Warsaw, 6 September 2013

Researchers, campaigners and policymakers may wish to explore these contrasting attitudes further, in particular the seemingly polarised political leanings of women compared to men, and the apparent differences in their values and views on issues such as national identity, the rights of minorities and EU membership. In particular, political bodies and youth organisations should interrogate why young women feel less heard by those in power and seek to amplify their voices in public discourse.

3.2 Differences between younger and older age groups

Differences also emerge between younger respondents, aged 18–24, and the older cohort, aged 25–30, which might be particularly useful for youth organisations and those supporting young people with their entry to adulthood.

Figure 12 Socio-economic categories by age



Younger respondents were less satisfied with life overall (just over 35 per cent compared to almost 45 per cent among 25- to 30-year-olds), and more likely to express that they don't know what to do with their life. They feel more closely connected to their peer group than older respondents, but less connected to Poland, their region and their town or city. They are more likely to volunteer for causes and express pride in Polish culture, literature and art. They are more likely to believe globalisation has a positive impact on their lives, despite believing it to have a negative impact on the environment. They are the most likely to consider leaving Poland to work abroad. Over half express pessimistic views about the future – they fear global terrorism and military conflicts, and are more likely to notice fake news. They are more left-leaning, more likely to volunteer and more often hold liberal views towards sex education and sexual minorities' rights. However, like young women, they are less likely to feel heard by those in power.

In contrast, **older respondents** were more likely to feel they can influence government or corporations. They were more likely to want radical change, expressing more concern about mass migration and less support for the rights of sexual minorities. In focus groups, older respondents expressed higher expectations in terms of employment and financial security. If, as the data suggests, young adults become both more right-leaning and more influential as they approach their 30s, researchers, campaigners and policymakers may want to explore more deeply how this might affect minority groups over time, and how they might amplify the voices of the younger cohort to ensure richer public debate and discussion.

3.3 Differences in education, employment status and income level

Young Poles with a **higher education** and those with **higher incomes** report a higher quality of life than others. They are more satisfied with life overall and were the most positive about the opportunities available to them. Those with higher educational qualifications are more likely to see work as an important source of fulfilment that must align with one's passions and potential in life, and they describe boring, routine jobs in very negative terms.

This group participate in more cultural activities, consume more entertainment and are more likely to support environmental and humanitarian causes. Over half believe that globalisation has had a positive impact on their life and they are particularly concerned about climate change and fake news.

Both those with a higher education and those who are higher earners say democratic values are important and lean to the right. Higher earners, in particular, are more likely to feel heard by those in power.

Meanwhile, those with **lower educational qualifications** more often feel that they don't know what to do with their life, with little more than a third expressing that they are satisfied. They tend to value stability and family connections, but are less optimistic and more likely to consider leaving Poland to work abroad. They are least likely to believe globalisation has had a positive impact on their life, and tend to feel less heard by politicians. Similarly, those with **lower incomes** are also less optimistic than their higher-earning counterparts.

Those who are currently **studying** say democratic values are important and are concerned about climate change, and they are more likely to express left-leaning views. As with the younger age group, they feel less heard by those in power. Notably, those who had pursued a vocational pathway were the only group who felt education had equipped them for their working lives.

Organisations and policymakers may wish to consider the implications for these groups further, in particular:

- exploring the apparent shift in political alignment and perceived agency over the course of higher education
- investigating how best to address the challenges faced by lower earners and those with lower educational qualifications
- examining the potential of vocational approaches and how to ensure those with lower education are not marginalised or left behind by the rest of society.

3.4 Geopolitical differences between cities, towns and rural areas

Further differences emerge between those living in cities and those living in smaller towns and rural areas. Those living in **big cities** on higher incomes were more likely to focus on their principal relationship and close friendships, rather than family ties. They evaluate work in terms of their passions and fulfilling their potential, and often place higher expectations on themselves in this regard. This group were more likely to say that helping others is important.

Those living in cities are more likely to lean to the left, support the rights of sexual minorities and feel they have an impact on government decisions, despite the current government being positioned to the right. Those living in the bigger cities are more likely to say democratic values are important and to believe globalisation has a positive impact on their life, with over 55 per cent expressing this view. However, they are among the most pessimistic about the future of the EU and almost half express concern about climate change, wishing to see decisive action in this regard.

In contrast, those living in **smaller towns** value stability over interesting work or personal fulfilment. They are more likely to see family as the primary source of their security, and value frequent intergenerational meetings and traditional celebrations. Most intend to have children if they have not already. They are more likely to express pride in their Catholic faith and are slightly more likely to express anti-migrant views, in particular towards inward migration from Muslim countries. No one from these groups raised the issue of climate change when talking about issues that are important to them.

Those living in **rural areas** are less optimistic about life and report more challenges and limiting factors, such as low wages, than other groups. They participate less in cultural activities and consume less entertainment. In focus groups, this group reported feeling judged negatively when compared to those raised in urban areas, and expressed that wealth differences are often the cause of jealousy. They felt worst hit by the pandemic, feeling cut off from normal life and losing income due to reductions in public transport restricting their access to nearby economic centres. However, they feel more able to affect their local authorities and parishes than other groups, through activities such as participatory budgeting or local organising. They are also most likely to describe new opportunities in the digital realm and are particularly vocal in calling for better investment in infrastructure and connectivity.

Researchers, organisations and policymakers should consider further research into these differences, which suggest a clear divide between the metropolitan and small-town or rural population. Campaigners may want to pay particular attention to how their message connects with these markedly different audiences – the more left-leaning young adults living in Poland's big cities and the more traditional, conservative inhabitants of the rest of the country. The mapping that follows suggests further evidence of a geographical and political divide.

“

Those living in rural areas are less optimistic about life and report more challenges.



Spotlight



Mapping regional differences

As described earlier in this report, there has been extensive discussion and debate in recent years about the extent to which apparent social divides in Poland also follow regional boundaries.

To better understand whether this applies to young adults at this moment in time, a separate piece of analysis was conducted using the Next Generation Survey data which exposes certain regional differences and trends. These findings could pave the way for further regional and local mapping and research, and be used to better target programmes, campaigns and initiatives to different groups of young adults.

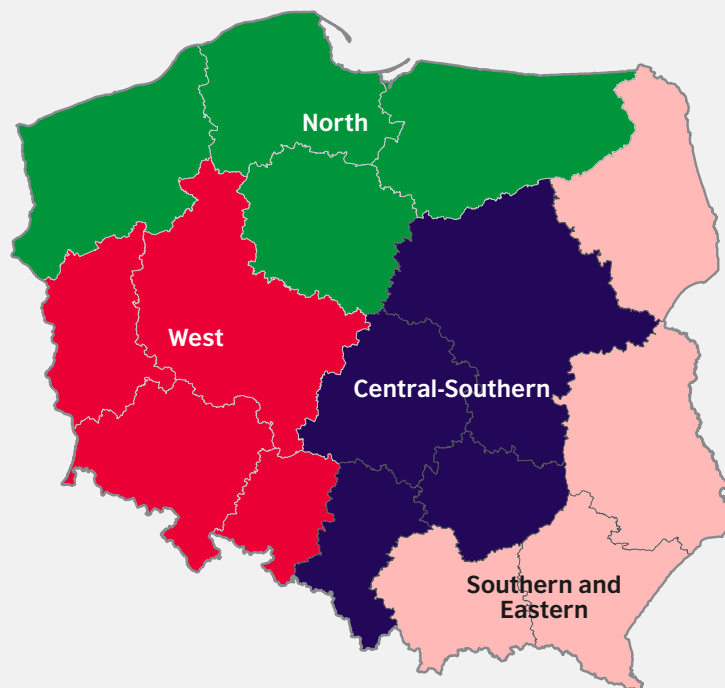
Approach

As the sample is too small to perform regional-level comparisons and the original research design was not controlled to be regionally representative, the 16 regions (or voivodeships) of Poland were combined into four macro-

regions determined by their geographical proximity to one another, their historical resemblance and similarities in terms of survey findings. Mean distances between respondents in each region were computed and this data was used to cluster regions.

Each of the four macro-regions is similar in size and comprises the same number of voivodeships (four). The macro-regions are the North, the West, Central-South and South-East. By means of context, the South-East macro-region is mostly rural and more traditional – especially in the South – with higher levels of religiosity, while the North and West macro-regions are generally more densely populated, urban and liberal (Jałowiecki, 1996).

Figure 13 Macro-regions used in this analysis



Spotlight: Mapping regional differences

The resulting findings are representative for each region in terms of age structure, gender and size of the locality, and can be used for cross-regional comparisons. However, they also yield slightly different results to those in the country-level analysis described in this report. For more detail on the method used, please see Appendix 3. The most significant findings are described below and organised thematically.

Main findings and implications

Socio-economic conditions

There are more students and fewer employed people in the South-East region. Fewer people live with their partners here, and more live with their parents or other family members. Almost 75 per cent live in houses, while only 25 per cent live in flats, compared to a 50:50 ratio in the more urbanised North. As a consequence, dwelling size here is larger than other areas at over 100 square metres compared with 78 square metres in the North. People in the South-East tend to lean more towards the opinion that their incomes are better than their parents. Those in the West are statistically slightly more inclined to state that the Covid-19 pandemic has worsened their household's material situation. This tells us that living conditions and employment vary across different regions of Poland, which should be considered in future research and policy discussion.

Politics, civil society and religion

According to the analysis, the North and West are more left-leaning and liberal, while the Central-South and South-East regions are more right-wing. People in the South-East region engage more often in religious groups, while those in the North and West prefer other associations such as environmental groups. Although the majority in all regions state they believe in God (whether or not they take part in religious activities), atheism is reported more in the North (25 per cent) and West (31 per cent).

The South-East region contains the highest percentage who believe in God and take part in religious activities (37 per cent). The more religious segment of respondents from this macro-region are more prone to identify religious denomination as an important factor for success in life. Furthermore, 15 per cent there consider Polish faith in the Catholic Church to be one of their main sources of pride in being Polish – more than double the other macro-regions.

Meanwhile, young adults in western Poland seem to be less engaged in elections and more likely to claim that they are not going to vote in future, preferring to take part in protests or demonstrations. Respondents in the West are more likely to state that politicians do not focus on issues that matter to them, although 75 per cent across all regions echoed this view.

There is, therefore, a clear tendency in the west of the country to feel ignored by formal politics and thus to opt for informal political processes, such as protests, to make change, in contrast to the central, southern and eastern regions who are more likely to be reached through religious organisations and more conservative messaging. These differences in political alignment should be considered by any organisations, campaigners and policymakers seeking to engage young adults in political and civic activity and causes.

National and European identity

Almost two-thirds of people in the South-East and Central-South regions are more inclined to declare that they identify with Poland, compared to those living in the West and North, where less than 60 per cent express this view. On the other hand, those in the West and North are more likely to declare that they are proud of Polish accession to the EU.

Respondents in the South-East regions are more likely to cite Polish history, landscapes and patriotism as sources of pride, as well as attachment to tradition and religion. On the other hand, those in the West tend to cite Polish cuisine, culture and arts.

Spotlight: Mapping regional differences

Again, these differences point to a divide that could have implications for those running programmes or campaigns, or developing policies in different regions.

Outlook, views and values

Those in the South-East region less frequently cite climate change as one of the major threats facing the world (just under 35 per cent, compared to more than 40 per cent in the West and North). On the other hand, they are relatively more concerned with the negative effects of automation and mass joblessness, especially compared to their counterparts in the North (just over 20 per cent compared to an average of just over 15 per cent in the West and North). Young adults in the North and West, on the other hand, are more concerned with the state of democracy.

When it comes to views and values, respondents in the South-East region demonstrate a

generally more conservative profile, which manifests in a variety of ways. They are less open to same-sex marriages or adoption, less supportive of sex education and are less likely to identify lack of access to sexual healthcare as a challenge currently facing young people in Poland.

The differences described provide a snapshot of a country divided on political orientation and values along regional lines, although some of the margins are slight. Nonetheless, we recommend that researchers, organisations, campaigners and policymakers use this evidence to build a more nuanced and detailed picture of the attitudes and perspectives of young Poles which can then be used to inform provision, messaging and decisions across a variety of areas of life, from political engagement to national identity, and from religious values to the rights of minorities.

Chapter 4

Recommendations and conclusion

The findings of the research were shared with the task force of Young Advisers, comprising six young leaders and activists from across Poland, each representing different causes and movements, including democratic participation, climate change, women's rights, science and socially engaged arts. The group met three times – first for an orientation session, second to take part in a demo of an FGI, and, subsequently, to give feedback on the findings and make their own recommendations.

To arrive at these recommendations, we drew on the views and suggestions of the research subjects themselves, particularly the demands for change voiced by over 90 participants in the FGIs, as well as the results of the Next Generation Survey.

Given the considerable scope and scale of this research, it should be noted that these recommendations were devised by a select group and cannot be considered representative of the sample as a whole. The Young Advisers are highly engaged in a variety of causes and have therefore drawn on their own experiences and values, while endeavouring to offer a balanced view on the findings and their significance. They themselves noted that many of the changes discussed below – relating as they do to matters of taxation, public spending and reform – fall within the responsibility of the Polish government and parliament, and require extensive public consultation. They also noted that the changes called for are both long-term and complex, and therefore endeavoured to offer more immediate and actionable solutions which might be provided by NGOs and other action groups in the short to medium term.

Given their subjective nature, we encourage you to use these recommendations as a starting point for further research and policy discussion, and have indicated throughout the way in which we believe they could best be explored to deepen and diversify the discussion.

4.1 Main recommendations

1. Enable more personal economic freedom

A majority of young Poles want **more economic freedom, less regulation and lower taxation**, while also calling for **more public spending** to drive up living standards. Balancing these demands, the Young Advisers proposed increasing taxation on the highest earners and using the additional income to deliver social programmes that improve people's lives, which are described in further detail in the recommendations that follow.

A lack of affordable housing was the most commonly cited challenge in the Next Generation Survey, followed by a lack of good-quality job opportunities. This was reinforced by young adults' strong sense of agency and their aspirations for attaining financial security and independence in life. Further research and policy discussion should look at what needs to change in order for young people to be able to find work, live independently and – for those who wish to – buy their own home.

Meanwhile, young adults tend to express positive views towards **entrepreneurship** and want it to be easier to start your own business in Poland. Participants and Young Advisers suggested that business start-up skills should be taught during secondary education to better equip young people to launch entrepreneurial careers. Further research and discussion about encouraging young adult enterprise in Poland should be undertaken. In the shorter term, NGOs and education providers may wish to further explore the specific needs of younger people in relation to their skill development, to better inform the provision of programmes and training.

2. Increase public spending on health and social care, and refocus policy on the younger generation's needs

Young adults are divided over the merit of social benefits, with some being in favour of greater support for the most vulnerable in society, and others favouring a more hands-off approach. The Young Advisers argued that there is a need for **increased investment in social security**, including childcare, healthcare and social care, including for disabled people and families in receipt of free school meals.

It was suggested that particular attention needs to be paid to supporting those experiencing challenges with **mental health and substance abuse**, which was identified as one of the major challenges facing young Poles in the Next Generation Survey, with just under 60 per cent citing it as an important issue. The Young Advisers expressed concern about the lack of community mental health services and support for young people in Poland, as well as a near-absence of counselling provision.

These recommended changes are predominantly aimed at policymakers and would require targeted investment. As above, there could also be a role for NGOs working in this space, in terms of offering well-being support, mentoring, befriending and other support networks. It was noted that this, in itself, could not fill the current gap in mental health service provision, and that further discussion, awareness raising and action are needed to bring about the change required.

When considering these recommendations alongside those above relating to the economy, there is a clear argument for a more general refocusing of public policy on **the needs of younger generations**, for example to address the pressures of the housing and job markets (as discussed above in Recommendation 1), issues in the education system (discussed in Recommendation 3 below) and to tackle global issues that concern many younger people, such as climate change.

3. Reimagine and reform education

Large numbers of respondents reported that they felt education had not prepared them for their adult lives. Discussions revealed that many young Poles consider the education system to be too rigid and rooted in tradition, focusing purely on academic subjects – although those who had taken a vocational pathway were more satisfied. Education was one of the topics prioritised by the Young Advisers, who proposed a range of reforms which they hope would lead to a more tolerant society. They framed their suggestions in terms of providing greater opportunity to gain experience, explore future choices and make informed decisions. Their suggestions include:

- teaching useful **life skills** which are needed in the current job market, such as starting a business, understanding tax, creative problem-solving and foreign languages
- introducing **careers advice** in schools
- teaching about racial, religious, sexual and cultural **diversity** in schools as a means of deepening sensitivity and tolerance in society
- teaching **empathy** from pre-school age
- teaching **ethics**, alongside religion, in schools, and for religious education itself to become more plural and explore beliefs beyond the Catholic faith
- providing high-quality **sex education** in schools, with an emphasis on learning about sexual preferences and the rights of minorities, as well as providing practical support to those who need it
- encouraging employers and educational bodies to recognise the value of **volunteering**
- introducing **debating** in schools to increase young people's ability to talk about challenging topics and to improve dialogue in wider society.

These changes would require a review of the national curriculum and should therefore be considered by policymakers. For their part, educators and educational bodies might consider how they can begin to incorporate these recommendations into their existing curricula, for example by introducing more dialogue and awareness-raising.

The Young Advisers felt a particular emphasis was needed on the teaching of ethics, which tends not to be offered alongside religious education, despite being permitted. In this respect, the advisers saw an opportunity for schools to take responsibility in being more open and accommodating in their approach.

Researchers, providers and policymakers may also wish to consider the following topics which surfaced during the research:

- exploring young adults' apparent shift in political alignment (from left to right) and perceived increase in agency over the course of higher education
- addressing the challenges faced by lower earners and those with lower educational qualifications
- harnessing the apparent success of vocational approaches in preparing young people for their working lives (as reported by those who have received a vocational education themselves).

4. Encourage participation and collective action to refresh politics and civil society

The young adults who took part in the focus groups voiced a need for change, but at the same time were pessimistic in their assessment of whether it could be achieved. The Young Advisers recognised that to fully achieve this shift in attitudes and values and improve the quality of politics, young people themselves need to start influencing the reality around them and they see the best path to achieving this to be through encouraging increased **democratic and civic participation**. They suggest this should be taught in schools, focusing both on the value of participation, its methods and tools, as well as providing practical opportunities to participate themselves from an early age, for example creating improved models for pupils and students to take part in **student boards, student co-operatives and school governing bodies**.

They felt this should be complemented by **support in building confidence, agency and trust** among young people, through formal and wider civic education. This might include encouraging increased participation in existing youth bodies and organisations, providing more opportunities to voice opinions and concerns. They suggested government should involve more citizens – including young people – in **conversations and consultations** about their communities and the policies which affect their lives. They described successful experiments involving **participatory budgeting** – where a community is involved in decisions about how local resources are invested, to drive improved outcomes for their area. It should be noted that those living in smaller towns and rural areas already feel more able to engage and influence such activities, and that many young people see individual actions as the 'building blocks' needed for change.

Reflecting on their own experiences as activists and campaigners, the Young Advisers felt that **youth activism and collective action** should be promoted through positive examples of influencers and campaigners such as Greta Thunberg so as to show younger people that their voices matter. One suggestion was to create a comprehensive **online platform** to regularly inform young people about opportunities in areas of activism, volunteering and third sector development. It was noted that NGOs are particularly well placed to provide such platforms, along with the advice and guidance that young people need to engage and participate.

The recommendations in this area are wide-ranging, and would require the input of central, as well as local, government to ensure more citizens can be involved in decision making. The group felt that educational bodies also had a pivotal role to play in this issue, and that the expressed lack of agency, opportunities and participation could begin to be addressed by NGOs working in the field of participation, and, in particular, youth participation, where they felt there were insufficient organisations currently operating. This, in turn, would require increased funding and investment in the NGO sector and related initiatives.

5. Promote greater tolerance and freedom in Polish society

The recommendations workshop was held in the aftermath of widespread protests about women's reproductive rights and the rights of sexual minorities in Poland. It was therefore not surprising that these issues were at the foreground of discussions with the Young Advisers, many of whom were involved in activism and campaigning about these issues. They expressed concern about hostility towards the LGBT+ community and the way the debate is portrayed in the media and public discourse, following the controversial introduction of so-called 'LGBTQ+ free zones'.

It should be noted that opinion about these topics varies greatly among young adults in Poland, as described in the main body of the report above, and what may seem a given in the UK or Western Europe is not necessarily universally accepted in Poland.

As well as the aforementioned incorporation of ethics, empathy and diversity into young people's education and the promotion of participation and civic engagement, the Young Advisers also suggested involving more NGOs in promoting diversity and dialogue in society. Some felt that further separation of the church from the state would also be beneficial, but this view is not necessarily reflective of the wider surveyed population.

With respect to diversity, in particular, the Young Advisers felt that future initiatives need to include workshops, discussions, projects, cultural festivals and educational campaigns to promote tolerance, respect of others and cultural sensitivity. As well as the NGO sector, they felt that these calls may be best met by international initiatives and funding streams, especially where the rights of minorities are concerned.

4.2 Further suggestions and next steps

As well as the issues prioritised by the Young Advisers, and based on the findings of the research overall, the research team suggest the following activities and topics would hold significant potential for further research and discussion.

4.2.1 Research activities

- Further **local and regional-level mapping and consultation** should be carried out with young people, organisations and policymakers, to broaden the conversation and drill deeper into the topics surfaced in this study, with a view to better understanding the needs of specific segments, such as the younger age group, the rurally isolated or low earners, and to amplifying the voices of those groups which report feeling less heard by those in power, e.g. women and younger adults. We believe that building evidence of what these groups need and want at a local and regional level, as well as understanding their political alignments and personal values, will lead to more nuanced and appropriate policymaking and more targeted provision going forward.

- Follow-up **research, roundtables and ideas exchanges** should be implemented to capture changing attitudes and perspectives after a year of protests and the pandemic, to better understand the impact the demonstrations had and what the implications are for young adult voices in Poland going forward. In particular, discussion should focus on the shifting and polarising views and values that surfaced in this study, including national identity, European integration, the role of the church and the rights of minorities.
- On the most practical level, organisations, policymakers and campaigners should further explore the potential for **digital engagement** and other forms of action and participation that could help bring together and empower young adults and amplify their voices, particularly those forms that are initiated and co-created by younger people themselves, e.g. collaborative networks and campaign groups.

4.2.2 Research topics

The following topics and questions should be further explored by researchers, policymakers and young people themselves going forward.

Identity and voice

- How can the distinctive identities of the younger generation of Poles be better documented, shared and celebrated?
- What would enable young Poles to express themselves, their needs and their ideas about the future?
- To what extent are young campaigners listened to and how are their calls addressed?

Quality of life and emotional health

- What is needed to ensure the improved living standards called for by young adults?
- What can and should be done to support young people to navigate a complex and challenging world?
- Given calls for increased action on mental health, what can be done to improve health services and other forms of support?

Digital development

- What investment is needed in digital technologies and connectivity to ensure that all young Poles can navigate and thrive in the modern world?
- How can younger people's digital skills be harnessed to improve their lives and society more generally?

Emigration and globalisation

- Given the majority of young Poles show a strong interest in emigrating and hold conflicting views on globalisation, what more can be done to ensure young Poles benefit fully from the opportunities of emigration, while also ensuring that Poland itself succeeds as a nation and is an attractive place to find work and make a life?
- How can young adults promote Poland's reputation around the world?

Climate change

- What role will young Poles have in the coming reckoning on the world's climate?
- How can interest, ideas and action be harnessed to put Poland at the forefront of the mission?

This study has described a young population divided by aspirations, political orientation, values and geography, but united by a shared connection to their country and a desire for a more tolerant society. Throughout the research, young adults spoke their minds and gave us an open and honest appraisal of the world they see around them.

But this research should only be the start of listening to young people and acting with them on their ideas and suggestions. There is enormous potential to further harness and amplify youth voice in Poland and no one is better placed to step up and speak out than young people themselves.

For their part, older adults – whether family members, educators, researchers or policymakers – have a duty to uphold young people's right to shape their experiences, the services they use and the society in which they live. To do that, they must commit to channeling towards young people the resources, investment and support they need, so that they are equipped, empowered and ready to initiate action and lead change.

By working together, younger and older generations can pool their collective energies to create positive transformation and to progress Poland, both at home and on the world stage. This is the future young Poles call for, and it is everyone's responsibility to make it a reality.

We thank everyone who has taken part in *Next Generation Poland*, and in particular the young people who made this work possible.

Bibliography

Academy of Leaders (2017) *Youth entrepreneurship survey: National results*. Available online at: issuu.com/akademialiderow/docs/40_raport_zbiorczy_final_v2_web

Batorski, D, Michalska, B & Pyżalski, J (2018) *Internet i otoczenie komunikacyjne. Młodzi 2018 (Internet and communication environment. Youth 2018)*. Available online at: mlodzi2018.pl/files/raport2.pdf

Boni, M (2019) *Rekomendacje, Młodzi 2018 (Recommendations, Youth 2018)*. Available online at: mlodzi2018.pl/files/raport15.pdf

Brzozowska-Brywczyńska, M (2018) *Kulturowe środowisko jednoróżców – kilka notatek o młodziźnie i kulturze popularnej, Młodzi 2018 (Cultural environment of unicorns – a few notes about youth and popular culture, Youth 2018)*. Available online at: mlodzi2018.pl/files/raport12.pdf

CBOS (2018) *Attitude to other nations*. Available online at: www.cbos.pl/EN/publications/reports/2019/017_19.pdf

CBOS (2019) *Preferences for the family model. Report 46/2019*. Available online at: www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K_046_19.PDF

CBOS (2019) *Acceptance of alternative models of family life. Report 42/2019*. Available online at: www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K_042_19.PDF

Central Statistical Office (2020) *Information regarding the labour market in the third quarter of 2020*. Warsaw: Central Statistical Office, p. 20. Available online at: stat.gov.pl/download/gfx/portalinformacyjny/en/defaultaktualnosci/3293/8/37/1/information_regarding_the_labour_market_in_the_third_quarter_of_2020_s1.pdf

Deloitte (2019) *Property index. Overview of European Residential Markets*. Available online at: www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/de/Documents/real-estate/property-index-2019-2.pdf

Długosz, P (2018) *Różnicowanie się szans edukacyjnych i życiowych młodzieży. Casus peryferii. Młodzi 2018 (Diversifying the educational and life opportunities of young people. Case of the periphery. Youth 2018)*. Available online at: mlodzi2018.pl/files/raport6.pdf

Eurobarometer (2020) Available online at: data.europa.eu/euodp/pl/data/dataset/S2183_464_ENG

European Social Survey (2018) Available online at: nesstar.ess.nsd.uib.no/webview/index.jsp?v=2&submode=abstract&study=http%3A%2F%2F129.177.90.83%3A80%2Fobj%2FStudy%2FESS9e03.1&mode=documentation&top=yes

European Values Study (1999, 2017) *Fundacja Stocznia calculations based on European Values Study data for 1999 and 2017*. Available online at: europeanvaluesstudy.eu/

Eurostat (2020a) *GDP and main components (output, expenditure and income)*. Available online at: ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/nama_10_gdp/default/table?lang=en

Eurostat (2020b) *Ageing Europe – statistics on population developments*. Available online at: ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ageing_Europe_-_statistics_on_population_developments

Facebook (2016) *Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet*. Available online at: en-gb.facebook.com/ogolnopolskistrajkkobiet/

Gumkowska, H & Herbst, J (2005) *Podstawowe fakty o organizacjach pozarządowych in Poland*. Available online at: api.ngo.pl/media/get/119290

Hootsuite (2020) *Digital 2020 Poland*. Available online at: datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-poland

Jałowiecki, B (1996) *Przestrzeń historyczna, regionalizm, regionalizacja*. Oblicza polskich regionów. Warsaw.

Johnson, S & Loveman, GW (1995) Starting Over: Poland after Communism. *Harvard Business Review* 73/2. Available online at: hbr.org/1995/03/starting-over-poland-after-communism

Kulas, P (2018) *Młode elity intelektualne i ich obywatelskie przesłanie, Młodzi 2018 (Young intellectual elites and their message, Youth 2018)*. Poland.

Lukowski, J & Zawaszki, H (2001) *A Concise History of Poland (First ed.)*. Cambridge.

Niemczycki, I (2018) *Europa dla młodych, Młodzi 2018 (Europa dla młodych, Youth 2018)*. Poland.

OKO Press (2019) *To będzie koniec cywilizacji, jaką znamy. Depresja klimatyczna w Polsce*. Available online at: oko.press/to-bedzie-koniec-cywilizacji-jaka-znamy-depresja-klimatyczna-w-polsce-wywiad/

PEW Research Centre (2018) *Global Attitudes & Trends*. Available online at: www.pewresearch.org/global/

Podemski, K (2014) *Społeczeństwo obywatelskie w Polsce 25 lat po wielkiej zmianie*. Available online at: core.ac.uk/download/pdf/143490899.pdf

Polish Supreme Audit Office (2017) *Realizacja zadań narodowego programu ochrony zdrowia psychicznego*. Available online at: www.nik.gov.pl/plik/id,12692,vp,15090.pdf

Polityka (2020) *Sondaż w sprawie protestów. Kto bierze udział w spacerach?* Available online at: www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kraj/2074683,1,sondaz-w-sprawie-protestow-kto-bierze-udzial-w-spacerach.read

Statistics Poland (2014) *Population Projection 2014–2050*. Available online at: stat.gov.pl/en/topics/population/population-projection/population-projection-2014-2050,2,5.html

Statistics Poland (2019) *Population: Size and structure by territorial division in 2019*. Available online at: stat.gov.pl/en/topics/population/population/population-size-and-structure-and-vital-statistics-in-poland-by-territorial-divison-as-of-december-31-2019,3,27.html

The Guardian (2019) Poland's drift to the right divides young male and female voters. Available online at: www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/08/poland-election-drift-to-right-divides-young-male-and-female-voters

The Guardian (2020a) Standing up for the 'real' Poland: how Duda exploited rural–urban divide to win re-election. Available online at: www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/18/andrzej-duda-poland-rural-urban-re-election

The Guardian (2020b) 'A backlash against a patriarchal culture': How Polish protests go beyond abortion rights. Available online at: www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/06/a-backlash-against-a-patriarchal-culture-how-polish-protests-go-beyond-abortion-rights

The Guardian (2020) Ursula von der Leyen says Poland's 'LGBT-free zones' have no place in EU. Available online at: www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/16/ursula-von-der-leyen-says-polands-lgbt-free-zones-have-no-place-in-eu

Wiszejko-Wierzbicka, D & Kwiatkowska, A (2016) *Entering Adulthood in Poland: A Report from the Nationwide Survey of Young Poles Aged 18–29*. Poland.

Young Europe (2017) *The youth study of TUI Foundation*. Available online at: www.tui-stiftung.de/en/media/young-europe-2017-the-youth-study-of-tui-foundation/

Youth Observatory (2020a) *Conclusions from the 'Youth Observatory' – expert seminars on Gender and LGBT*. Poland.

Youth Observatory (2020b) *Conclusions from the 'Youth Observatory' – seminar on the youth engagement for fight for climate*. Poland.

Appendix 1

Details of Academic Task Force members and Young Advisers

Academic Task Force

Dr Roch Dunin-Wąsowicz, guest teacher, European Institute, London School of Economics

Roch is a sociologist who examines European transnational cultural spaces and networks. He researches Brexit, the EU and the social organisation and civic identity of Polish migrants in the UK.

Dr Piotr Godzisz, Lecturer in Criminology, School of Social Sciences, Birmingham City University

Piotr examines human rights, civil society and has a background in research and advocacy for LGBT+ communities in Poland.

Dr Kinga Goodwin, Research Assistant, University of Stirling

Kinga is a graduate of the School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies and the author of a European Commission-funded study into integration and changing identities of Polish people in UK society since 2004. She was formerly, and at the time of this research, Research Project Officer at the UCL European Institute.

Dr Anna Horolets, Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Warsaw

Anna conducts research from the perspectives of sociocultural anthropology, sociology and discourse analysis, with a focus on spatial mobility, including tourism and migration.

Dr Jakub Jablonowski, Lecturer in Political Geography, University of Exeter

Jakub is a lecturer in political geography at the University of Exeter, and a research associate at campaign group the3million, with an interest in social inclusion and race equality.

Katarzyna Malinowska, Social Psychology and Doctoral Candidate, Centre for Research on Prejudice, University of Warsaw

Katarzyna is a social psychologist and a doctoral candidate in the Center for Research on Prejudice at the University of Warsaw. She is interested in activism, different forms of collective action pro or against minority groups and how they are affected by group identification. She also works as a therapist with children and young adults with autism.

Dr Joanna Schmidt, Assistant Professor and Deputy Head of the Research Centre for Non-profit Organisational Management, Poznan University of Economics

Joanna's research interests include non-governmental organisations, the third sector, and social economy, human resources management (in NGOs), psychology in management, social psychology and education.

Dr Bartłomiej Walczak, Department of the History of Ideas and Cultural Anthropology, Institute of Applied Social Sciences, University of Warsaw

Bartłomiej is a sociologist, cultural anthropologist and author, and leads numerous Polish and international research and evaluation projects, including work related to implementing reform of pedagogical supervision.

Jan J Zygmuntowski, economist, public policy analyst and business adviser currently leading the Instrat think-tank

Jan's work is committed to shaping a new governance framework for data economy, digital platforms and innovation to secure an egalitarian future. He carried out his PhD research at Kozminski University focusing on public data stewardship and data commons. Jan is a young adult adviser on the task force.

Young Advisers

Nawojka Liwia Ciborska, youth climate strike activist, Fridays for Future

Nawojka Liwia Ciborska is a youth climate strike activist in the Fridays for Future initiative. She is a campaigner for climate justice, a feminist and vegan. Nawojka takes campaigns with Extinction Rebellion, Women's Strike, and Camp for Climate. Nawojka will graduate from secondary school this year.

Antonina Lewandowska, activist, Te Tematy

Antonina Lewandowska is a sociologist, sexual educator, feminist and activist, focusing in particular on sexual education for young people and campaigning on reproductive rights. She is a founding member of Te Tematy, a collective which advocates for sex education in schools, and a member of Ponton Group, who promote sexual health among young people, as well as a co-ordinator in the ASTRA Network, an international network of third sector organisations promoting the rights of sexual minorities and reproductive rights in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. She is a graduate of the Creating Social Policy course at the University of Cambridge.

Marta Marsicka, Programme Co-ordinator, Centrala Gallery

Marta Marsicka graduated from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan with an MA in Art History. After working as a tour guide at the National Museum in Poznan, she emigrated to the UK to pursue an Erasmus internship at Centrala Gallery in Birmingham, where she works as Programme Co-ordinator, planning and organising exhibitions and cultural events. She is a 2020–21 bursary awardee of Tate and Paul Mellons Centre's Emerging Curators Group. Marta is passionate about the representation of Central and Eastern European artists in the UK and making the British art scene truly diverse.

Pola Plaskota, President, Erasmus Student Network of Poland

Pola Plaskota is a graduate of biotechnology from Warsaw University of Technology. She is President of the Erasmus Student Network of Poland.

Michał Sienicki, educational activist

Michał Sienicki is an educational activist and student of sociology. He has actively participated in a number of youth boards and school councils in Warsaw. He is a former board member of the European Democratic Education Community, promoting democracy in schools. In 2019, he initiated a student strike to improve democratic education in Poland.

Aneta Ślęczek, master's student

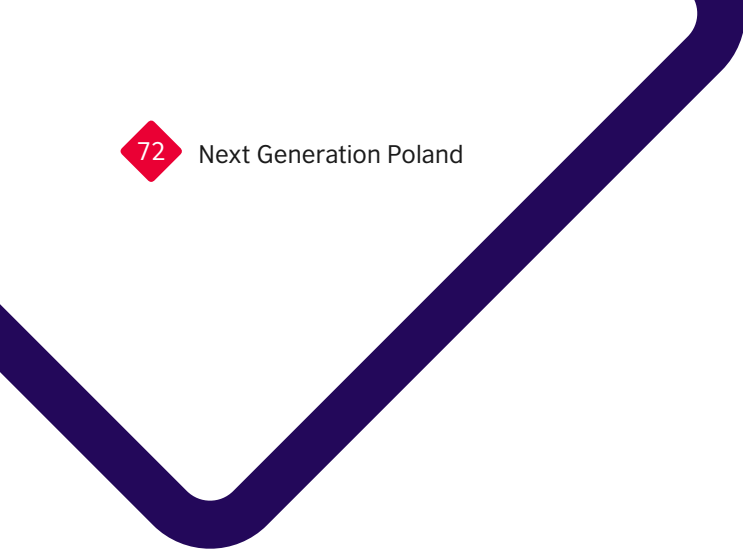
Aneta Ślęczek studied Journalism and Social Communication at the University of Economics in Katowice, training in graphic design and photo editing. After graduation, she carried out a placement at Centrala Gallery, Birmingham, specialising in photography and marketing, and is currently studying towards an MA in Graphic Design and Cultural Studies.

Appendix 2

Social media research – observed Facebook groups in more detail

1. **Group for young political activists:** a group that consists of people from the Polish youth politics community, with varied political views. The group is private and it is intended specifically for youths. It was created two years ago and has over 2,500 members. Several people join the group weekly – mostly university and high school students, many are working in various political and NGO structures. The goal of the group is improving youth politics – securing the legality of youth councils, giving them an actual and real power to act and to make decisions in their region. The group was created by a society that promotes political activity among youths.
2. **Group for liberal-minded youths:** the group was founded in May 2020 and is led by members of a youth organisation that has sustainable, free-market and liberal goals. This group has supporters that are liberally minded, especially people associated with the LGBT+ community, and it is addressed to young people. A vast majority of the group are university and high school students. The group is private and has about 800 members.
3. **A group for libertarian, nationalist youths:** the group was founded in July 2020 by young people associated with the community of Polish libertarian parties. The group mostly includes supporters of a federative Polish political party with a right-wing, nationalistic and eurosceptic profile. According to the group's description, it is intended to play a formative function, to consolidate its young supporters and to help share views among the confederation's different circles. The administrators set a top age cap of 30 years (although the group also includes people older than that). The group is private and has over 1,000 members. Despite having people with right-wing views, the community is strongly diverse when it comes to the worldview represented (mostly national conservatism and conservative libertarianism).
4. **Group for young liberals:** a group founded in June 2020 by people associated with a youth organisation, whose members are 13–25 years old, have liberal views and a pro-European stance, and display openness to minorities and multi-culturalism. They are co-operating with a Polish liberal party. The group is private and is a 'discussion-social' space for its supporters, as well as for other people interested in such topics as liberalism, free market and politics. The group has about 2,000 members, mostly young adults.
5. **A group for young politicians:** this private group was founded in July 2020. It was created by members of an organisation for young people whose goal was networking young activists and building a strong youth movement from that, which would have a real impact on the development of local communities. The group includes people of all views, who participate in the life of youth politics, are interested in youth politics or want to learn more about it. The group has about 200 members.
6. **A group for young anti-fascists:** the group was founded in October 2019 and began as a fan page of a coalition (of people, organisations, projects, communities), whose goal was to oppose nationalism, racism, sexism and hatred for other values – it promotes freedom, equality, solidarity and mutual help. The group is private and has about 3,700 members. It is not intended directly for youths, but a large portion of the community are young people – university students, school students and working people.
7. **Self-help group for all:** a grassroots self-help group created at the start of March 2020 for people in a difficult situation due to the Covid-19 pandemic. At first, they were one group, but they currently have about 150 regional subgroups. The goal is helping users – anyone can ask for help and anyone can provide it. It has a Poland-wide reach and it is private, with about 107,000 members, but there are also separate groups covering a specific area – i.e. the Warsaw division. Even though the group is not directly intended at youths, many belong to it.

- 8. Group for youths combatting the climate crisis:** a regional group representing a larger movement founded in June 2019. The group consists of activists wanting to work for the climate as part of an international movement. Group members are people ready to act and rallying for events organised under the movement's banner. The group is intended as a communication channel between representatives of the movement and people willing to join it. At the same time, it is intended as a place for sharing ideas for campaigns that support the prevention of the climate disaster. The group has 2,100 people – largely young adults.
- 9. A group fighting climate change for all:** a group for activists of an international movement founded in June 2019, as a discussion group of its Polish branch. The movement is social-political in character and its goal is expressing discontent towards the passiveness of the politicians who seem to fail to notice climate problems, the loss of biodiversity and the threat of human extinction. The goal of the group is sharing information and reflections on the environment and climate change, discussions on the activity of the movement, sharing information on events and member integration, and support in co-ordinating groups from various regions of Poland. The group has about 1,200 members. It is not directly addressed to youths, but there are many young people that belong to it.
- 10. A group about mankind's destructive impact on the environment:** a political group and grassroots initiative started in December 2016. The group's intention is raising awareness about human-caused climate change and ways to counter it, as well as sharing information on social campaigns and related aspects. There are about 11,800 members in the group. The group's members are people of various ages, including youths. The group also has mentors that help the less experienced members live more sustainable lives.
- 11. A group for people trying to protect the climate in their everyday life:** a group founded in July 2019, among others by a presidential candidate in the 2020 election. At present, the group is administered by young people. The goal of the group is promoting grassroots activities for the climate and zero-waste lifestyle. The group is public with 35,500 members and it seems that many of its members are young people.
- 12. Group working for the improvement of Polish education:** a public group founded in January 2018 by a foundation that supports education. The goal of the group is developing shared ideas for actions that help reform the Polish education. The group is directed at people of all ages. It also includes young adults and the group itself is connected to a female student's fan page (the fan page shows what education looks like through the eyes of a female student activist). The group has about 700 members.
- 13. Group advocating for equal rights:** the group was founded in April 2019 by an NGO advocating for LGBT+ individuals and their loved ones, through political, social and legal support, by creating and implementing systemic educational solutions and creating a broad-reaching alliance movement. The group is intended for exchanging information and mobilising oneself to civil and pro-democratic activity in striving to equal rights of LGBT+ people. The goal of the group is increasing the visibility and number of people involved in the cause for equality and dignity of LGBT+ people. The group is private and has about 1,600 members. Even though the group is not directed at a specific age group, it has many young adult members.

- 
- 14. Group that fights against LGBT+ rights:** a group created by members and supporters of a very well-known Polish organisation that declares to be doing research in legal culture and spiritual heritage, which has Polish culture at its root and that supports anti-abortion initiatives. The group was created in February 2019 in response to the mayor of Warsaw signing the Warsaw municipal policy for supporting the LGBT+ community. In practice, this is a discussion group of the organisation's supporters; at present it is also a fan page of an anti-abortion foundation. The group is not addressed to any specific age category; it also has young adult members. The number of members is about 6,700.
 - 15. Women's rights advocacy group:** a private group, created in April 2016, as a response to the government's plans to further restrict access to abortion in Poland. The group covers such topics as the reproductive rights of women, examples of sexism, monitoring actions and initiatives going against the right to abortion, and the social, cultural and political situation of women in Poland and the world. The group's objective is to raise social and civic awareness among women, minorities and people from exclusion-vulnerable groups. The group is not intended for a specific age category, but it has many young female members. There are about 100,000 members.
 - 16. Anti-abortion group:** the group is a sub-section of a popular Catholic group. It is private and was founded in May 2017. The goal of the group is sharing information on how to actively protect life since its conception, searching for such activities and initiating them, and learning and building strong arguments against abortion. Even though the group is not directly addressed to any age category, it seems that a vast majority of the approximately 700 members are young adults. Being Catholic is not a requirement.
 - 17. Group of people questioning the significance of the Covid-19 pandemic:** the private group was created in August 2020 and includes people who wish to 'discover the truth about the false coronavirus pandemic'. The group is not directed at a specific age category, but it also includes young people. The goal of the group is helping others understand how society is being 'manipulated'. It has 17,100 members. The group also has a mentoring programme intended to promote 'exposing the manipulations about the pandemic'. The group was included in our study as it stands out from others that are similar as far as the topic is concerned – this group is an activist one at its core. We believed that a closer look at this group in action could be interesting because, according to a survey for the ciekawewylyczby.pl portal, one in three Polish people aged 18–34 years old believes that the epidemic is an invention of politicians, media and the pharma companies.

Appendix 3

Notes on the mapping methodology used in Chapter 3

The sample in this study is too small to perform regional-level comparisons, and these were not assumed in the research (the sample design did not include regions as stratification criteria). Although the sample is proportional to the regional distribution of the target population, it was not controlled to be regionally representative: it does not hold for regional differences in the distribution of other stratification criteria such as gender, age, education and size of the locality.

To mitigate against these issues, 16 smaller regions (voivodeships) were combined into four macro-regions and post-stratification weights were applied. Macro-regions were determined by their geographical proximity (whether or not they share boundaries), historical resemblance and their similarities in terms of the survey findings. Distances were computed between all observations in the dataset across all questions asked in the survey, resulting in a matrix of measures of distance between all respondents in terms of the information they provided, using a measure known as Gower distance. Mean distances between respondents in each region were then computed, and this data was used to cluster regions, using hierarchical clustering.

The resulting findings are representative for each region in terms of age structure, gender and size of the locality, and may be used for cross-regional comparisons. However, they will also yield slightly different results at the level of marginal distributions for the entire sample than those used in the country-level analysis described in this report, due to differences in sample design (stratification).



Sound Connections is a UK leader in youth voice and participation, advocating approaches that put young people at the heart of decision making about culture, education and the arts. Through its well-regarded research consultancy and training arm, Sound Connections has delivered national and international projects which promote the voices of young people and raise awareness of youth voice among organisations and policymakers. We commissioned Lawrence Becko, an independent consultant and youth voice specialist, to lead this project, working closely with our Deputy Director, Jennifer Raven.

www.sound-connections.org.uk
www.lawrencebecko.com

Centrala works at the intersections between UK and Polish art, cultural life and politics, bringing cutting-edge exhibitions, films, events and discussions to their space in Birmingham, and delivering research, consultancy and advocacy on issues facing the Polish diaspora in the UK, as well as actively participating in conversations about culture and politics in Poland itself – most recently, the rise of the far right and gender equality. The Centrala team is led by Alicja Kaczmarek, who chaired the Academic Task Force and Young Advisers group, and whose expertise ranges across Polish society, politics, economics, culture, gender equality, migration, youth and race relations.

centrala-space.org.uk/

Stocznia (Shipyard) is the Centre for Social Innovation and Research based in Warsaw, using innovative and proven methods for studying the challenges of social life in Poland, through the lenses of civic participation and social innovation. Their talented homegrown team of researchers, innovators and specialists have experience across Polish political, social and cultural life. The research was overseen by Jan Herbst, Director for Research Quality, and supported by Agata Gołasa.

stocznia.org.pl/



The British Council builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. We help young people to gain the skills, confidence and connections they are looking for to realise their potential and to participate in strong and inclusive communities. We support them to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications. Our work in arts and culture stimulates creative expression and exchange and nurtures creative enterprise.

The Next Generation series is part of the British Council's commitment to exploring youth voice and choice. It aims to understand youth attitudes and aspirations, amplify youth voice and support better youth policymaking. The reports focus on young people in countries experiencing a period of significant change, to ensure that young people's voices are heard and their interests represented in decisions that will have lasting implications for their lives.

www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-series/next-generation

Photography:

Front cover © AboutLife/Shutterstock.com; page 7 © Elzbieta Krzysztof/Shutterstock.com; page 8 © praszkievicz/Shutterstock.com; page 15 © fotodrobik/Shutterstock.com; page 19 © Keycreative_AW/Shutterstock.com; page 20 © Jacob Lund/Shutterstock.com; page 26 © Rafal Olkis/Shutterstock.com; page 31 © Dziurek/Shutterstock.com; page 36 © Lena Ivanova/Shutterstock.com; page 39 © sirtravelalot/Shutterstock.com; page 41 © Szymon Mucha/Shutterstock.com; page 51 © kravka/Shutterstock.com; page 54 © Tomasz Bidermann/Shutterstock.com; page 73 © pikselstock/Shutterstock.com; pages 29, 32, 52, 57 © Mat Wright