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LEVEL OF LIVING OF POLISH CITIZENS
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The content outline: The paper focuses on the analysis of the variety of standards of living within the society of interwar Poland. These were determined primarily by individual streams of income and the scope and availability of public services. The standard of living is represented through the analysis of the range of income and remuneration within basic social and professional groups, housing conditions, and the level of schooling. It needs to be added that the image of the standard of living of various social groups is incomplete, with biggest gaps appearing in the study of small trade (merchant activity, craft, cottage industry) and some groups within the peasant population.

Zarys treści: Przedmiotem artykułu jest analiza zróżnicowania poziomu życia społeczeństwa Polski międzywojennej. Determinowały go przede wszystkim indywidualne strumienie dochodowe oraz zakres i dostępność usług publicznych. W celu przedstawienia standardu życia przeprowadzono analizę rozpiętości dochodowych i płacowych podstawowych grup społeczno-zawodowych, warunki mieszkaniowe i poziom skolaryzacji. Dodać należy, że obraz poziomu życia różnych grup społecznych jest niepełny, podstawowe luki dotyczą sektora drobnotowarowego (kupiectwo, rzemiosło, chałupnictwo) oraz niektórych grup ludności chłopskiej.

Keywords: level of living, standard of living, interwar Poland, income of the population, consumption, housing conditions

Słowa kluczowe: poziom życia, standard życia, II Rzeczpospolita, dochody ludności, konsumpcja, warunki mieszkaniowe

Introduction

The main objective of this study is an attempt to extract information on the diversity in the level of living of the inhabitants of interwar Poland (the Second Polish Republic) according to basic socio-occupational groups. This will be achieved using several measures: the income level, wage level, consumption of basic goods, housing conditions and school enrolment rate. It should, however, be added that there is no fully reliable data on GDP per capita, and only limited data on income, particularly regarding small-scale enterprises (trading, crafts, cottage work) and the peasant population operating in a quasi-natural agricultural economy. Data on the wages of particular groups of hired workers is incomplete and not fully comparable, although statistics on the nominal wages of industrial workers are relatively extensive. Regarding the study of family budgets, these are limited to a small group of households of blue- and white-collar workers. The information on housing conditions comes from censuses (1921 and 1931), as well as surveys; the latter relate to towns and cities. Statistics on schooling are, however, relatively extensive.

Citizens' level of living is determined principally by individual streams of income, as well as the scope and availability of public services. In the case of interwar Poland, where apart from education, the public services sector was relatively poorly developed, individual income was the main criterion for assessing access to goods. Therefore, we can formulate the hypothesis that the scale of differences in income was the main indicator of diversity in the level of living of particular socio-occupational groups, and consumption and lifestyle patterns.

Level of living – definitions

In the literature, the category of “level of living” exists alongside such terms as “standard of living”, “quality of life” and “well-being”. Although not fully synonymous, the closest two terms are “level” and “standard” of living, the remaining terms being wider, as discussed below. The term standard of living became widespread in the second half of the twentieth century and replaced the term “level of living” which was used in the interwar period.¹ Both terms related to the

¹ J.S. Davis, “Standard and content of living”, *American Economic Review*, 35, 1945, no. 1, pp. 1–15.

typically tangible aspects of life and essentially described its quantitative aspects in the form of the goods and services at the disposal of an individual. They were measured using GDP per capita, particularly in comparative analyses of long-term and regional variations. This limited approach was widely criticized; it was pointed out that qualitative elements were omitted and argued that while GDP growth may lead to positive changes in other dimensions of the standard of living, an inverse relationship is also possible. Furthermore, superficially identifying the level of living with the value of this ratio leads to the risk of politicians focusing on economic growth rather than on measures which promote the sustainable development of man.²

This criticism led to drawing up wider measures for the standard of living, taking into account factors such as the quality and availability of housing, the number of working hours required to meet people's needs, access to healthcare and its quality, access to education, life expectancy, amount of holiday, the quality of employment and its availability. In subsequent approaches, the concept of standard of living was expanded by such values as: human rights, the condition of the environment, political and economic stability, political and religious freedom, and security. Thus, in academic terminology, terms such as "quality of life" or "well-being" appeared. This does not mean that the tangible factors ceased to play an important role – as shown by public opinion polls, the tangible factors remained the main determinants of well-being.³ Naturally, elements which define life satisfaction are subjective and based on evaluations made by individuals, therefore, the assessment is made by and depends on the observer.⁴

In Polish professional literature, standard of living is usually defined as the degree of satisfying the tangible and cultural needs of society

² D. Morris, *Measuring the Condition of the World's Poor: The Physical Quality of Life Index*, New York 1979; United Nations, *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation*, New York 1952.

³ R.A. Easterlin, "The worldwide standard of living since 1800", *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 14, 2000, no. 1, pp. 7–26. This was confirmed, among other things, by research by C. Hadley, *The Pattern of Human Concerns*, University Press New Brunswick 1965. It covered 14,000 respondents from 12 countries representing all continents. People stated that the basis of their well-being is the level of living and tangible goods (from 60 to 95% respondents), next came family (27–76%), and then health, work, social and professional status, relations with children and friends, and lastly the political situation.

⁴ More extensively: A. Brzezińska, M. Stolarska, J. Zielińska, *Poczucie jakości życia w okresie dorosłości*, in: *Zadania i role społeczne w okresie dorosłości*, eds. K. Appelt, J. Wojciechowska, Poznań 2000, pp. 103–126.

by a stream of chargeable and free goods and services at a specific moment in time and in a specific area. These needs include: food; housing; healthcare; education; leisure; social security and management of income.⁵ Wider definitions are also available, where the set of measures is close to the set used to determine the quality of life. And thus Czesław Bywalec and Stanisław Wydymus add the degree of use of the natural and social environment,⁶ and Zygmunt Żekoński stipulates that level of living includes all the circumstances covering amenities (working conditions, ecology, leisure time, personal safety) associated with satisfying one's individual and collective needs.⁷

Although the set of conditions which determine the quality of life has been significantly expanded in recent years, economic aspects continue to play a primary role. Therefore, in measuring the level of living, first and foremost the income of the population and its components are taken into account, such as the salary received from an employer, proceeds from assets, but also the number of persons with gainful employment in a family, or the number of dependents. Conditions such as the quality of housing, the quality and availability of public services (education, health) are also important. It is worth mentioning that each society is diversified in terms of income, and therefore also the level of living, and transfers made by the state can only partly mitigate them. Interwar Poland was a country characterized by far-reaching differences in property and social status, and this fact is particularly important.

The income of the population and its diversity

In professional literature on the subject, we find statements concerning the great diversity in the financial position of Polish interwar society, and therefore, huge differences in the level of living and consumption patterns.⁸

The level of living of the bourgeoisie, as they were then called, or business spheres – owners of large industrial or financial enterprises –

⁵ A. Luszniwicz, *Statystyka społeczna: podstawowe problemy i metody*, Warszawa 1982.

⁶ Cz. Bywalec, S. Wydymus, "Poziom życia ludności Polski w porównaniu z krajami Europejskiej Wspólnoty Gospodarczej", *Ekonomista* 1992, no. 5–6.

⁷ Z. Żekoński, "Z problemów metodologicznych sformułowania społeczno-bytowych celów rozwoju", *Gospodarka Planowa*, 6, 1974.

⁸ J. Żarnowski, *Spółczesność Polski międzywojennej*, Warszawa 1969, pp. 159–160.

was the highest. This group was relatively small, and concentrated in large economic and urban centres.⁹ For example, in Warsaw, at the very top of the income ladder were people with income of more than 200,000 zlotys per year (only 88 persons in 1936, of which 66 were legal entities and 22 individuals); the group with income of more than 80,000 zlotys consisted of 286 persons.¹⁰ Next came the middle bourgeoisie (with an annual income of from 10,000 to 18,000 zlotys), and the largest group known as the petty bourgeoisie (with income of less than 12,000 zlotys per annum).¹¹

The consumption pattern or, more broadly, lifestyle was a consequence of financial status thereby creating the bourgeois subculture (elite clubs such as the Hunting Club and the Rotary Club). Barbara Poznańska states that this subculture was largely autonomous and its forms were not simple “function of income.”¹² A distinguishing feature was the high housing standards (luxury villas and suburban holiday cottages) and lavish lifestyle (luxurious restaurants, fashion houses, salons, organized hunts, car races, sailing – yacht clubs, horse riding). Education was highly valued in these circles, both from the perspective of social position (young people emphasized their separate status through memberships in corporations such as Arkonia or Sarmatia), and professional careers. It was mainly the “new bourgeoisie” that benefited from higher education (the “old”, nineteenth-century bourgeoisie often had only basic education), and then there were the national as well as social differences (e.g. Jewish businesspeople usually received less schooling).¹³ This elite lived in a cosmopolitan world, maintained

⁹ In total, the bourgeoisie and aristocracy together with members of their families were assessed at 260–450 thousand people (from 0.8% to 1.4% of the country’s population); see: C. Leszczyńska, Ł. Lisiecka, “Zróżnicowanie dochodów w Polsce międzywojennej”, in: *Oblicza nierówności społecznych. Studia interdyscyplinarne*, ed. J. Klebaniuk, Warszawa 2007, pp. 111–127.

¹⁰ B. Poznańska, “Obraz warszawskiego bourgeois w okresie międzywojennym”, in: *Image przedsiębiorcy gospodarczego w Polsce w XIX i XX wieku*, ed. R. Kołodziejczyk, Warszawa 1993, p. 219. On a countrywide scale, the group of big capitalists was assessed at 2,000 people, and the so-called financial oligarchy at around 300 people (annual income exceeding 120,000 zlotys). See also: Z. Landau, “Oligarchia finansowa”, in: *Druga Rzeczpospolita. Gospodarka – Społeczeństwo – Miejsce w świecie*, eds. Z. Landau, J. Tomaszewski, Warszawa 1977, pp. 199, 204–205, and 209; J. Żarnowski, *Społeczeństwo II Rzeczypospolitej 1918–1939*, Warszawa 1973, p. 266.

¹¹ B. Poznańska, “Obraz warszawskiego bourgeois”, p. 221.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 217 and 221.

¹³ This referred, among other things, to the Łódź bourgeoisie; see more: K. Badziak, “Obraz łódzkiej burżuazji przemysłowej w okresie międzywojennym. Działalność ekonomiczna (wybrane problemy)”, in: *Image przedsiębiorcy*, pp. 191–202.

family and business ties with rich landowners and senior government officials (the power elite, statist bourgeoisie).¹⁴ In provincial Poland, this type of community consisted, among others, of landowners, owners of larger firms or directors of joint-stock companies and public enterprises, who were usually the alumni of technical or business colleges. Their income allowed them to live prosperously and to invest (establish firms, purchase smaller estates).¹⁵

Landowners, in particular the landed nobility, who owned large properties, were also at the top of the income ladder. One of the richest members of this group, Janusz Radziwiłł, earned income on landed estates and from shares in numerous companies. Forests and sawmills in Cumań in Volhynia (29,000 ha), and the property in Ołyka (4,600 ha) and Szpanów (6,400 ha) (all in Ukraine now) brought in the highest net profit, while the properties in Nieborów (3,700 ha) “worked” largely to maintain the palace located there. The palace at Ołyka and in Warsaw (Bielańska Street), also generated costs. In 1928 the entire property was assessed as being worth 2.8 million zlotys.¹⁶

Ludwik Landau classified the above social groups among bourgeois-officials – that is the top social stratum. He adopted the division of society according to the “general level of affluence” criterion (based on an estimate of the income consumed)¹⁷ which also covered two lower income groups: the artisans and workers, as well as rural inhabitants.¹⁸ Their numbers and structure are shown in Table 1.

The ratio of income consumed by person in the socio-occupational groups described above is shown in Figure 1. The data presented should be treated as indicative of the level of income in particular socio-occupational groups.

The average income per member of the total population amounted to 810 zlotys; 3,900 zlotys in the wealthiest groups, whereas for white-collar

¹⁴ B. Poznańska, “Obraz warszawskiego bourgeois”, pp. 222–223.

¹⁵ M.B. Markowski, “Sfery przemysłowo-ziemiańskie między Pilicą a Wisłą w latach 1918–1939”, in: *Image przedsiębiorcy*, p. 185.

¹⁶ J. Durka, “Wynagrodzenia pracowników w majątku ziemskim Nieborów Janusza Radziwiłła w latach 30. XX w.”, in: *Praca i społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, eds. W. Mędrzecki, C. Leszczyńska, Warszawa 2014, pp. 88–89.

¹⁷ The consumed income was part of social income (it covered the consumed income, accumulated income [gross investments], increase in inventories, excess of exports over imports); see: M. Kalecki, L. Landau, *Szacunek dochodu społecznego w r. 1929*, Warszawa 1934.

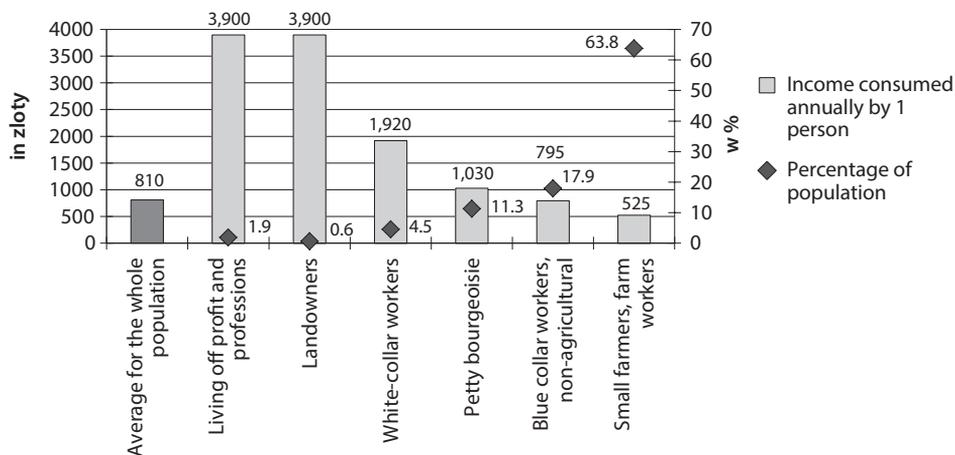
¹⁸ L. Landau, *Skład zawodowy ludności Polski jako podstawa badania struktury gospodarczej*, Warszawa 1931 (Sprawozdania i Przyczynki Naukowe Instytutu Badań Koniunktur Gospodarczych i Cen, vol. 11), pp. 17–18.

Table 1. Structure of the population according to the “overall level of affluence” in 1927

Description	in thousands	in percent
Total (economically active and inactive)	29,817.4	100.0
Bourgeoisie and officials	2,070.6	6.9
Profit earners (landowners, owners of industrial facilities ^a , rentiers, owners of commercial facilities, owners of transport facilities ^a)	564.9	1.9
Professions (education, medicine, law, science, art, theatre, civil services and church)	190.0	0.6
White collar workers	1,315.7	4.4
Artisans and blue-collar workers	8,619.5	28.9
Petty bourgeoisie (artisans, small shop owners, etc.)	3,329.5	11.2
Non-agricultural blue collar workers (industry, trade and crafts, public services – postal, railroad, domestics)	5,290.0	17.7
Peasants	18,767.2	63.0
Farm workers	3,217.2	10.8
Farmers	15,550.1	52.2
People without income	360.0	1.2

Source: L. Landau, „Skład zawodowy”, p. 15.

^a With at least category 2 industrial certificate.

Fig. 1. Consumed income by socio-occupational groups in 1929^a

Source: diagram on the basis of: M. Kalecki, L. Landau, *Szacunek dochodu*, pp. 37–44; L. Landau, „Skład zawodowy”, p. 15.

^a Population as in 1927, not including people without an income.

workers it was 1,920 zlotys and 1,030 zlotys for the petty bourgeoisie. Families of blue-collar workers and peasants whose income was lower than the national average were at the bottom of the ladder.¹⁹ They were also the most numerous groups, comprising 82% of the population.

The above data are average values and do not reflect the internal diversity of income within the groups. This is made clearer thanks to the research of Jan Wiśniewski, based on statistics for income tax and remuneration.²⁰ It covered the economically active (8.5 million people) who engaged in business activities outside agriculture²¹ and in agriculture; next the gainfully employed (white and blue collar workers) and pensioners.²² The population of economically active people was divided into subgroups according to interwar stratification: independent, other than in agriculture (1.1 million economically active), peasants (3.15 million), agricultural workers (1.6 million) and gainfully employed other than in agriculture (2.7 million, including those employed in the public sector, and pensioners – 0.55 million). The income earned by these groups is shown in the figures below.

The first diagram shows that more than 80% (approx. 7 million) of all economically active people earned an annual income of not more than 3,000 zlotys; agricultural workers were the worst off (nearly 100% of their income was less than 1,500 zlotys; it should be remembered that this amount was essentially considered the social minimum) and peasants (90% earned less than 3,000 zlotys). In other occupational groups income was distributed more evenly. This situation results in the picture shown in the second diagram: the dominant group in the lowest-income group were agricultural workers (more than 40%), then came workers other than in agriculture (30%) and peasants (approx. 15%). Groups with the highest income were primarily independent people (owners of larger companies, landowners, the liberal professions) and senior government officials.

These data confirm the conclusions of Ludwik Landau's estimates: the poorest strata of society were the agricultural workers as well as

¹⁹ It should be noted that almost 80% of rural consumption was natural (self-supplied) consumption (8 billion zlotys), and only 20% (2.3 billion zlotys) – purchase of goods from outside the farm; see: M. Kalecki, L. Landau, *Szacunek dochodu*, p. 5.

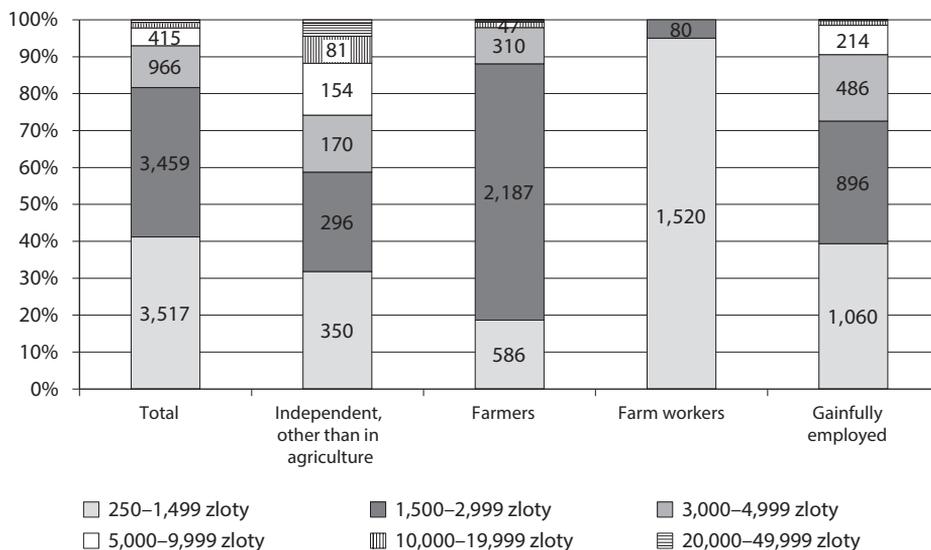
²⁰ J. Wiśniewski, *Rozkład dochodów według wysokości w r. 1929*, Warszawa 1934, p. 74.

²¹ Annual income amounting to no less than 1,500 zlotys was taxed (this amount was treated as a specific social minimum); in 1929, there were 650,000 taxpayers.

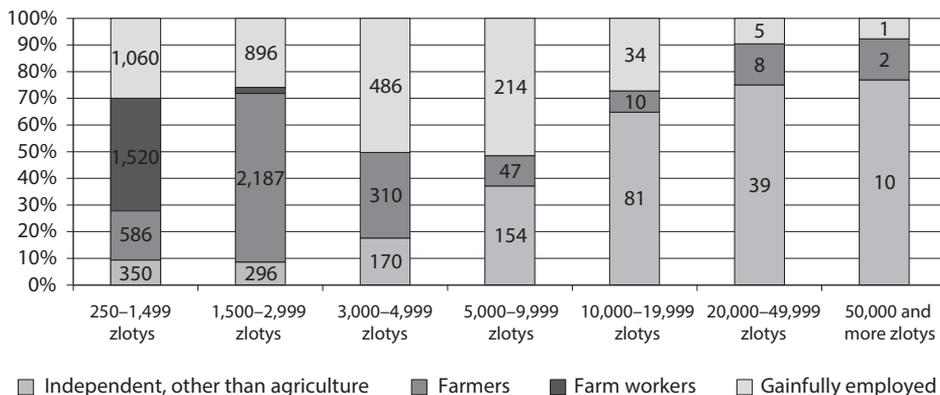
²² Annual income amounting to more than 2,500 zlotys was taxed. There were 581,000 taxpayers.

Fig. 2. Income level of particular occupational groups in 1929

A. Structure of occupational groups by amount of income



B. Break-down of income by occupational groups



Note: Amounts marked as data descriptions relate to occupationally active persons (in thousands).

Source: own schedule based on: J. Wiśniewski, *Rozkład dochodów*, pp. 70 and 74.

some of the peasants and people running their own businesses outside agriculture (petty artisans, traders, washerwomen, etc.). If we take an income of 1,500 zlotys as a criterion of poverty, then we can see it concerned mainly agricultural workers as well as nearly 60% of peasants and more than 50% of workers gainfully employed outside agriculture.

These analyses are summarized in Table 5, which amalgamates the income position of the groups analysed.

Table 2. Measures of diversification of economically active people in 1929

Description	Total	Farmers	Farm workers	Independent and outside agriculture	Gainfully employed		
					Workers	White-collar	State officers and pensioners
Economically active in thousands	8,546	3,150	1,600	1,100	1,100	477	546
Income per one economically active person in zlotys							
arithmetical average	2,502	2,133	745	5,455	2,080	5,080	3,850
median	1,690	1,910	630	2,356	1,805	3,940	3,360
mode	1,590	1,700	473	836	1,350	2,840	3,100
Gini coefficient ²³	0.48	0.25	0.27	0.60	0.32	0.36	–

Source: prepared by the author on the basis of: J. Wiśniewski, *Rozkład dochodów*, pp. 74–75.

The considerable inequality in income is confirmed by the value of the Gini coefficient (0.48). The highest spreads (0.6) were noted among independent people outside agriculture, which on the one hand was the effect of including affluent company owners in the group, and on the other, small trade outlets and manufacturing plants, etc. The smallest differences in income were noted among farmers and farm workers (0.25–0.27), it can therefore be concluded that they were a fairly homogenous group in terms of income. The gainfully employed were between these two groups: industrial workers and white-collar workers (0.32 and 0.36).

As can be ascertained from the data presented, each of the above groups was internally diverse. While the average annual income of an economically active person in the white-collar group was 4,650 zlotys, in the blue-collar group it was 2,059 zlotys (in 1929).²⁴ The monthly

²³ It adopts a 0 value for egalitarian distribution (without irregularities) and 1 in the event of extreme irregularities. In practice it is in the range of 0.15–0.50. Extreme situations – concentration of income in the hands of one person or equal distribution of income – are not encountered in reality.

²⁴ Estimates; see: L. Landau, *Dochody z pracy najemnej w r. 1929*, Warszawa 1934, pp. 30–31.

wage of an industrial worker was 172 zlotys on average, of a miner – 233 zlotys, and of a white-collar worker – 388 zlotys (data for 1929).²⁵

Income depended on education, the region, qualifications, gender, etc. For example, in the group of white-collar workers, the average monthly pay of a man with a lower education was 319 zlotys in 1930, and 273 zlotys in 1933; with an average-level education, 395 zlotys and 331 zlotys respectively, and with a higher education 686 zlotys and 580 zlotys respectively; women with a lower education would earn 237 zlotys and 203 zlotys respectively; 251 zlotys and 209 zlotys respectively with an average-level education, and 371 zlotys and 284 zlotys with a higher education.²⁶ Geographical diversity is shown in Table 3.

Industrial workers' wages were equally diversified. The average annual wage amounted to 2,059 zlotys; in mining was as much as 2,800 zlotys, 1,880 zlotys in the processing industry, and the lowest in the wood industry – 1,160–1,320 zlotys (data for 1929). Usually the larger the plant, the higher the wages, and the differences within one occupation could be as much as 50%.²⁷ Qualifications, the region, current market conditions and the plant's financial position also had an impact on the wage level. Unfortunately, there is no complete and comparable data showing the differences in wages; more in-depth research was begun in the second half of the 1930s (at that time data on actual earnings also began to be collected).²⁸ For example, in 1929 the wages for an 8-hour working day of a qualified brick layer was from 17.8 zlotys in Warsaw to 11.2 zlotys in Łódź (wages in other large cities

²⁵ In respect of workers, wages did not exceed 360 zlotys, and almost one quarter received less than 90 zlotys per month, more than one quarter over 220 zlotys; and in the white-collar worker group monthly salaries lower than 90 zlotys were earned by about 6%, and over 220 zlotys was earned by more than 60% of employees; see: L. Landau, *Place w Polsce w związku z rozwojem gospodarczym*, Warszawa 1933, pp. 20–21 and 34–36.

²⁶ T. Bartnicki, T. Czajkowski, *Struktura zatrudnienia i zarobki pracowników umysłowych*, Warszawa 1936, p. 129.

²⁷ The data relates to plants with a category 1–7 industrial certificate, employing 5 or more workers, without construction and printing. See: L. Landau, *Place w Polsce*, pp. 20–21 and 25–26.

²⁸ The data relating to payment rates does not show the actual wages depending on the time of work, allowances, etc. The differences between the rates and actual wages were higher in the group of qualified workers. See: J. Derengowski, "Place robotników przemysłowych w Polsce w latach 1924–1929", *Statystyka Pracy* 1930, no. 2, p. 121. In the 1930s, to gain better comparable data on an international scale, the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS) started to compare wage values by region and industry.

Table 3. White-collar workers by monthly salaries in 1935^a

Description	Number of employees (in December) in thousands	Employees – in % – by the amount of average monthly salary					
		less than 120 zlotys	120–180	180–360	360–480	480–720	720 zlotys and more
Total	279.0	26.1	21.6	32.4	7.8	7.7	4.4
Men	196.6	20.8	19.4	33.9	9.5	10.3	6.1
voivodeships:							
Central	87.1	16.1	17.7	36.1	10.7	11.8	7.6
Eastern	17.8	32.1	28.7	30.3	4.9	3.0	1.0
Poznań and Pomerania	33.0	27.1	21.9	33.9	7.2	6.0	3.9
Upper Silesia	19.8	10.7	10.0	30.4	15.1	22.4	11.4
Southern ^b	38.9	26.1	21.8	32.3	7.8	7.8	4.2
Women	82.4	38.6	26.7	28.9	3.8	1.7	0.3
voivodeships:							
Central	38.1	30.9	26.1	34.7	5.3	2.6	0.4
Eastern	6.1	52.9	28.8	17.1	1.0	0.1	0.1
Poznań and Pomerania	16.0	48.7	28.0	21.1	1.4	0.8	0.0
Upper Silesia	5.6	31.4	25.7	34.3	5.2	2.9	0.5
Southern ^b	16.6	44.1	26.3	25.8	2.9	0.8	0.1

Source: T. Bartnicki, T. Czajkowski, *Struktura zatrudnienia i zarobki pracowników umysłowych*, Warszawa 1936, p. 129.

^a The data relates to employees covered with pension insurance in the Social Insurance Institute (ZUS) (excluding State and local government officers).

^b Including Cieszyn Silesia.

fluctuated between these two extremes); in Warsaw a manual typesetter earned 20 zlotys but 15.22 zlotys in Łódź; an unqualified builder from 8.64 zlotys in Poznań to 6.48 zlotys in Kraków.²⁹ There were also marked differences among miners and metallurgists; here, wages were the highest in Upper Silesia.³⁰ *Statystyka Pracy* indicated that wages

²⁹ J. Derengowski, “Płace robotników”, pp. 122–23.

³⁰ Wage statistics in mining and metallurgy are more complete than in other industries, “Statystyka Pracy” provides constant data. The highest wages were noted in Upper Silesian mining, lower in the Dąbrowa and Kraków mines. For example, in December 1938 the average daily wage of a mine worker in Upper Silesia was 9.71 zlotys, in the Dąbrowa region 7.95 zlotys, in Kraków region mines 6.70 zlotys (the weighted

were very diversified, the wages of unqualified workers were sometimes higher than those of qualified employees in some plants.³¹ Generally speaking, it can be stated that the highest rates and earnings were in Warsaw and Upper Silesia, and the distinct advantage in both centres was mainly related to the presence of qualified workers. In the case of unqualified workers, the dispersion was relatively weak irrespective of the professional group and region.³² As Jan Derengowski wrote, the unqualified workers stratum largely comprised very poor members of the rural population migrating to cities. These people had “a lower standard of living and consumption needs than workers who were permanent residents of cities.”³³

The financial conditions of workers' families were determined mainly by the wages of the working family members, the differences in the numbers of dependents was not that significant.³⁴ According to Józef Wojtyniak's study it was earnings that significantly differentiated the “wealth” of workers' families in major urban centres (Table 4).

Household budget statistics make it possible to assess the consumption level; unfortunately, during the interwar period they only relate to a few dozen households of workers (respective research was carried out by GUS at the end of 1920s, and later in 1937). In 1927 an average worker's family spent 2,861 zlotys (818 zlotys per consumer unit), including for the purchase of goods such as 539 kg of bread (154 kg per consumer unit), 789 kg of potatoes, 282 l of milk, and 82 kg of various meats.³⁵ Data for Warsaw, depending on the level of affluence of the families, is shown in the table below. For comparative

average in the three regions was 9.03 zlotys; monthly wages: 233.3 zlotys; 188.4 zlotys; 159.8 zlotys; 216.2 zlotys respectively). Own calculations based on: “Zarobki robotników w górnictwie i hutnictwie”, *Statystyka Pracy* 1939, no. 1, pp. 40–45.

³¹ “Zarobki robotników w przemyśle przetwórczym”, *Statystyka Pracy* 1937, no. 1, p. 33.

³² J. Derengowski, “Płace robotników”, p. 124. The situation was similar in the 1930s, as indicated by the data published in *Statystyka Pracy*.

³³ J. Derengowski, “Płace robotników”, pp. 115 and 123.

³⁴ On average, there were four people per one household, including in more affluent families about 3.2, in poorest families 5.4 (data for 1928, based on household budget surveys); see: E. Otrębski, “Budżety domowe rodzin robotniczych w latach 1927 i 1928”, *Statystyka Pracy*, 1931, no. 3, p. 219; L. Landau, *Płace w Polsce*, p. 23. The surveys related to budgets of workers' families (in principle qualified) from Warsaw, Łódź and Sosnowiec.

³⁵ E. Otrębski, “Budżety domowe”, p. 229. More in: *Warunki życia robotniczego w Warszawie, Łodzi i Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim w świetle ankiet z 1927 roku*, Warszawa 1929, p. 333.

Table 4. Average family size and average wage in 1937

Description	Warsaw	Łódź	Silesia	Lviv	Poznań	Vilnius
Number of economically active people in a family	1.55	1.88	1.56	1.51	1.72	1.41
Average weekly wage in zlotys	26.00	24.93	29.30	17.77	25.54	18.12
Number of consumer units in a family	3.15	3.05	3.27	3.04	3.30	3.06
Average monthly income of a family per consumer unit ^a	46.66	45.83	51.82	32.50	48.57	29.37

Source: J. Wojtyniak, "Podział rodzin robotniczych według zamożności", *Statystyka Pracy* 1938, no. 3, p. 119.

^a Head of the family – 1.00 consumer unit, wife – 0.85, child aged 4–17 – 0.80, child aged 3–7 – 0.50, total 4-person family = 3.15 consumer units.

purposes the annual consumption in families of white-collar workers has also been provided.³⁶

These wages are given in nominal amounts, so they do not reflect the real value of earnings in relation to living expenses. A detailed analysis would be necessary to ascertain this but this would exceed the acceptable volume of this article. However, it can be said that the ratio of real wages for the whole population of industrial workers grew: taking 1929=100 as the base, it amounted to: 1921=54; 1924=59; 1934=129; 1938=141.³⁷

The above analyses do not include the peasant population. It is difficult to ascertain the standard of living in quantitative terms due to the absence of data on income from farms and other sources, and the considerable role of natural consumption. According to Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, over one-half of peasant farms did not give people the chance to provide "normal" support for the family, albeit the minimum (from the perspective of contemporary peasants) 0.5 ha of land was needed to satisfy the basic needs of one member of the household,

³⁶ The monthly cost of living (according to prices from May 1932) for a four-person family was: white-collar 141.26 zlotys, blue-collar 43.76 zlotys. See: L. Landau, "Wskaźnik kosztów utrzymania pracowników umysłowych", *Statystyka Pracy*, 1933, no. 1, pp. 18–19; E. Otrębski, "Wyniki badania budżetów domowych pracowników umysłowych przeprowadzonego w maju 1932 r.", *Statystyka Pracy* 1932, no. 4, pp. 345–348;

³⁷ Average amounts based on hourly rates: from 1931 based on wage rates, from 1932 based on hourly pay, attributing specific weights to particular industries; *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1939*, Warszawa 1939, p. 274.

Table 5. Average annual consumption of some products in Warsaw

A. By worker families; workers employed – 1927

Description	Typical budget	Annual expenses per consumer unit ^a in zlotys			
		up to 599	600–899	900–1,199	1,200 and more
Number of families researched	x	9	16	7	8
Average annual consumption of products per consumer unit					
Bread in kg	152.2	147.5	160.2	168.8	130.0
Buns and bread in kg	11.3	7.8	11.6	19.4	29.3
Potatoes in kg	190.6	181.5	201.4	219.0	176.0
Other vegetables in kg	51.3	42.6	49.2	71.4	106.3
Milk in l	64.8	38.6	85.1	121.5	141.7
Eggs (number)	38.9	14.9	50.9	74.4	182.0
Meat, cured meat products and fish in kg	30.7	22.8	36.9	44.0	65.1
Sugar and sweets in kg	20.1	17.3	22.1	25.2	31.4

B. White-collar worker families in 1932

Description	Typical budget	Annual expenses per consumer unit ^a in zlotys			
		up to 1,439	1,440–1,799	1,800–2,999	3,000 and more
Number of families researched	x	8	11	33	19
Average annual consumption of products per consumer unit					
Bread in kg	97.3	106.4	89.8	88.7	82.2
Buns and bread in kg	28.6	22.9	28.3	33.7	43.4
Potatoes in kg	202.3	246.0	173.4	147.4	142.7
Other vegetables in kg	55.8	47.3	50.8	67.2	77.4
Milk in l	139.6	123.6	166.6	143.6	171.5
Eggs (number)	242.7	196.0	268.8	308.0	294.9
Meat, cured meat products and fish in kg	67.0	49.4	70.8	88.8	100.0
Sugar and sweets in kg	31.7	30.4	26.5	37.4	33.2

Source: *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1939*, Warsaw 1939, pp. 280–283.

^a Head of the family—1.00 consumer unit, wife—0.85, child aged 4–17—0.80, child aged 3–7—0.50, total four-person family =3.15 consumer units.

i.e. 2–2.5 ha for a 4–5 member family.³⁸ This criterion was not met by approximately 1.2 million households (out of a total of 3 million households).³⁹ On the other hand, the income of approximately 2/3 of all peasant families (from the farm and other sources) enabled satisfying only the most basic needs – shelter, basic nutrition, essential clothing and a minimum amount of cash.⁴⁰ An analysis of inventories shows that adult peasants had at the most two sets of “Sunday” clothing and one warmer set for winter. A study of budgets indicates that the average peasant family spent only a few zlotys a year on culture (to purchase newspapers, books, visits to the cinema, a radio, etc.) and just as little on their children’s education. For comparison, in 1932 a white-collar worker’s family spent over 320 zlotys a year on culture (1932), and a blue-collar worker’s family 95 zlotys (1928).⁴¹ Buying a bicycle or sewing machine was a major undertaking which often necessitated taking out a loan. Participation in family and social gatherings was also very low. These circumstances also limited the level of social, cultural and material ambitions as well as the possibilities of realizing even modest consumer aspirations. The claims, repeated in sources, that some peasant families – mainly from the western and central territories – earned income which allowed them to achieve material conditions and a lifestyle similar to those of the petty bourgeoisie requires in-depth research. Here it would seem that the petty bourgeoisie was the model and point of reference for more affluent peasants.⁴²

The problems concerning the low level of meeting the population’s nutritional needs was researched in the 1930s by the League of Nations Committee for Nutrition. Based on information on the condition of army conscripts it was pointed out that in Poland where “evidence of large-scale malnutrition was found”, the ratio of “physical unfitness” was as high as 50%, and the number of rejections increased from 45.25 per 1,000 to 67.78 in 1932 (e.g. in Finland 21% of recruits were unfit for military service and doctors attributed this to the malnutrition

³⁸ W. Mędrzecki, “Gospodarstwo chłopskie jako instytucja pracy”, in: *Praca i społeczeństwo*, pp. 23–25.

³⁹ This was the number of farms 0–2 ha (using the criterion of overall area) or 747,000 of so-called farming groups (according to the census data from 1931 the criterion was the area of farmland). See: M. Mieszczankowski, *Struktura agrarna Polski międzywojennej*, Warszawa 1960, pp. 329 and 333.

⁴⁰ Excesses of products for sale were produced only by farms of at least 5 hectares.

⁴¹ L. Landau, “Wskaźnik kosztów utrzymania”, p. 9; E. Otrębski, “Budżety domowe”, p. 223.

⁴² W. Mędrzecki, “Gospodarstwo chłopskie”, pp. 27 and 28.

of the poorer classes).⁴³ Citing physiological research it was pointed out that the minimum needs of an adult was 2,400 calories net per day.⁴⁴ In Poland, analyses of blue-collar workers showed spreads of from 2,200 calories in the lowest income group to 3,140 calories in the highest.⁴⁵ This study was based on a small sample, a broader relating to the USA showed that nutrition in the lower-income groups was 2,130 calories per day and in Germany from 2,530 to 3,190; whereas in Sweden it ranged from 3,120 to 3,480 calories.⁴⁶ In the 1930s the standard of living in large areas of the world declined due to the economic crisis, and the calorie consumption in the lowest income groups dropped below that standard. This problem also affected the rural population, and the situation was particularly tragic for large masses of the rural population in Eastern Europe.⁴⁷

Living conditions – housing

The majority of people in interwar Poland lived in 1 and 2-room dwellings (64% of the urban and 85% of the rural population; data for 1931). The population density in these places was high, the average for the whole country was 4.9 persons per dwelling, 4.4 in towns and 5.2 in the country; the average number of people per room was 2.7 in the whole of Poland, 2.0 in towns and 3.1 in the country (including 3.9 persons in one-room dwellings in town and 4.8 in the country).⁴⁸ The population density per dwelling was high both in large and small towns, but it was the highest in rural areas. This is illustrated in the table below.

⁴³ League of Nations, *The problem of Nutrition*, vol. 1: *Interim Report of the Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition*, Geneva 1936, p. 49.

⁴⁴ Calorific needs were indicated by the Health Organization of the League of Nations. Adults (men and women) who do not engage in heavy duty work, needed 2,400 calories a day. If the work was light, they needed an additional 75 calories per hour, medium hard – 75–100 calories, very hard – 300 calories per hour; children aged 1–2 years – about 840 calories, 5–7 years – 1,440 calories, 11–14 years 1,900 to 2,200, over 15 years – 2,400 calories. See: The League of Nations, *The Problem of Nutrition*, vol. 2: *Report on the Physiological Bases of Nutrition*, Geneva, 1936. pp. 13–14.

⁴⁵ It followed from Polish research on family budgets that the nutritional value of the products consumed was 2,838 calories in 1927 and 2,784 calories per consumption unit in 1928. E. Otrębski, *Budżety domowe rodzin robotniczych w latach 1927–1928*, "Statystyka Pracy" 1931, no. 3, p. 215.

⁴⁶ League of Nations, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 70.

⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 77–78 and 84–85.

⁴⁸ A. Andrzejewski, *Polityka mieszkaniowa*, Warszawa 1987, pp. 126 and 149.

Table 6. Population in 1- and 2-room dwellings in 1931

Description	Population				
	total in thousands	including in dwellings with the number of persons per room in %			
		2 and less	2-4	4-6	more than 6
Towns with population over 20 thousand	5,358	44.5	34.8	12.7	6.0
1-room dwellings	1,741	12.2	36.7	32.2	18.3
2-room dwellings	1,629	37.9	53.2	10.6	x
Smaller towns	3,165	40.4	37.7	13.4	7.0
1-room dwellings	975	11.7	32.0	33.1	22.7
2-room dwellings	1,170	34.1	56.3	8.6	x
Country	23,097	19.0	40.7	22.8	15.3
1-room dwellings	11,023	5.0	24.7	37.2	32.1
2-room dwellings	8,574	21.1	63.4	13.6	x

Source: own calculations based on: "Wyniki ostateczne opracowania spisu ludności z dn. 9. XII. 1931 r.", a supplement to *Wiadomości Statystyczne*, 1938, no. 18, pages unnumbered.

In the larger towns 63% of the whole population lived in 1- and 2-room dwellings, 67% in smaller towns and as much as 85% in villages. There living conditions were the worst, farmers with small areas of arable land and farm workers were the most overcrowded. These extremely difficult living conditions were one of the harshest accusations made against landowners. Nevertheless, regional differences were also noted. In the Poznań voivodeship farm workers' buildings were often made of brick and roofed with tar paper, and sometimes ensured better living conditions than in the homes of petty farmers and multi-child peasant families. The owner of the Gola estate thus characterized one of the best dwellings there: "In principle, each dwelling has a separate entrance with an entrance hall, to prevent bickering neighbours, next a room with a wooden floor, a second, smaller room and a kitchen, where sleeping is not allowed. The dwelling has an attic with a separate entrance [...]. New dwellings [...] have an additional third room in the attic for young men. The attic is for storing the grain received as in-kind earnings, and tools, and flammable objects cannot be stored there."⁴⁹

The situation was quite different on estates in the Lublin voivodeship. In 1930 the owner of the Brzezice estates recorded that seven

⁴⁹ T. Janicki, "Wielka własność ziemiska w Wielkopolsce jako miejsce pracy (1918-1939)", in: *Praca i społeczeństwo*, p. 44.

buildings for the servants were in good conditions (two wooden, five brick). The Ciechanki estate, however, recorded twenty wooden buildings roofed with tiles and one wooden house consisting of two dwellings for the servants. The worst accommodation was the “temporary” one. Some of the workers on this estate lived in “terrible conditions, in the damp cellars of the distillery, where they installed wooden partitions to imitate living quarters. The pot-bellied stoves where food was cooked had pipes going out through one small window which was the only light source for the large dungeon”. Newly-built dwellings had one room with a kitchen hearth, without a floor and with a windowless cubby hole. Tomasz Osiński refers to the opinions of Jan Lucjan Kochanowski, son of the last owner of the Łopiennik estate: “More than one hundred workers and their families lived in three brick-built living-quarters, each with four, or rather eight, dwellings. Two of them were one-floor, with eight dwellings each, and one had two floors, four dwellings on each floor. The condition of the latter – the oldest – one was the worst. The roof had holes, was constantly being mended, and cracked walls. There were no floors on the ground floor, only a mud floor, and the dwellings consisted of small cubicles. According to today’s criteria the building would be condemned and only fit for demolition. The situation was only slightly better in the earlier eight-dwelling buildings. Two dwellings were accessed through one entrance hall. There was quite a large room without a stove in each one, a cubicle with a kitchen stove and a small cubby hole. The only lighting, apart from daylight, which entered the dwelling through one window, were paraffin lamps. The buildings were insulated, but due to the risk of fire they were insulated with dung. The estate’s administration staff were offered a quite different standard of living. “The ‘writer’s’ quarters consisted of three rooms: the kitchen, the pantry and two rooms, underneath was a cellar, and close by the farm buildings – a henhouse and a pigsty.”⁵⁰

Workers’ living quarters in large towns were also of a low standard. A survey conducted in 1927 among blue-collar families in Warsaw, Łódź, Dąbrowa and the Silesian coal basins showed that they were characterized by:

a) few sewerage facilities (in Warsaw 53% of apartments had a water supply in rooms or even in the entrance hall, 18% had a toilet; 19% and 3% respectively in Łódź; 4% and 0% in the Dąbrowa Basin respectively and 82% and 65% respectively in Silesia);

⁵⁰ T. Osiński, *Robotnicy rolni w majątkach ziemiańskich powiatu lubelskiego w latach 20. XX w.*, in: *Praca i społeczeństwo*, pp. 65–66.

b) gas and carbide lighting (about 80% of apartments in Warsaw and Łódź, 65% in the Dąbrowa basin and only 33% in Silesia).⁵¹

In terms of quality, Silesian living quarters were decidedly better than those in other industrial centres. This is confirmed by data for the largest towns based on the 1931 census.

Table 7. Population in buildings without installations in 1931^a

Description	Population in buildings without installations as % of the total urban population
Total	33.4
Small towns ^b	54.9
Larger towns ^b	20.4
Chorzów ^c	0.9
Katowice	1.6
Poznań	4.4
Warsaw	9.1
Cracow	13.4
Łódź	14.6
Lviv	18.8
Bydgoszcz	22.9
Sosnowiec	23.4
Częstochowa	26.6
Vilnius	36.0
Lublin	33.3
Gdynia	35.1

Source: *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1939*, p. 57.

^a Data based on the census.

^b Small towns: less than 20,000 people, larger – 20,000 and more.

^c According to administrative data as at 1 July 1934.

Education

The last topic I would like to discuss is access to education. In 1921, one third of the population of interwar Poland was illiterate and in 1931 – it was one fifth. Illiteracy prevailed mainly among the older rural population in all regions except for the western voivodeships.

⁵¹ A. Walenta, *Stosunki mieszkaniowe rodzin robotniczych objętych ankietą o budżetach domowych w Warszawie, Łodzi, Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim i na Śląsku*, "Statystyka Pracy" 1928, no. 4, p. 331.

Table 8. Illiteracy in 1921 and 1931^a

Description		Population aged 10 and more who could not read or write – as % of the total population in the given age brackets								
		total ^b	10–14 years	15–19	20–24	25–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60 years and more
Poland										
Total	1921	33.1	29.7	24.0	23.7	25.7	31.5	38.6	46.6	54.2
	1931	23.1	6.6	12.4	16.9	17.1	21.4	30.3	38.6	50.0
Towns	1921	18.7	13.5	11.6	12.0	13.4	17.6	23.6	30.7	37.1
	1931	12.2	2.3	4.2	6.2	7.4	10.5	16.4	22.6	33.4
Villages	1921	38.1	34.4	28.0	28.0	30.7	37.2	44.4	52.1	59.4
	1931	27.6	8.0	15.5	21.4	21.3	26.4	36.7	45.5	56.3
By groups of voivodeships in 1931										
Central ^c										
Total		22.3	3.7	7.4	11.3	15.1	22.6	32.5	41.6	54.2
Towns		15.6	2.6	4.2	6.5	9.6	14.7	22.2	29.5	41.1
Villages		25.9	4.2	9.0	13.9	18.3	27.3	38.9	48.8	60.6
Eastern										
Total		41.0	17.0	31.1	37.3	35.6	39.1	49.3	60.1	68.7
Towns		15.6	3.8	7.3	10.0	11.0	13.6	20.1	28.1	37.3
Villages		45.5	18.9	35.1	41.9	40.0	44.2	54.8	66.0	74.1
Western										
Total		2.7	0.6	0.9	1.2	1.3	1.8	2.6	3.9	11.6
Towns		2.0	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.8	1.0	1.5	2.8	10.2
Villages		3.2	0.6	1.0	1.4	0.6	2.3	3.4	4.5	12.2
Southern										
Total		24.2	8.2	14.7	20.7	17.0	18.6	28.9	39.8	53.5
Towns		11.6	2.5	5.9	8.1	6.9	7.8	12.9	20.3	32.6
Villages		28.2	9.5	17.6	24.9	20.3	22.2	34.5	46.3	60.0

Source: *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1939*, p. 28.

^a Data based on censuses; without the army.

^b Jointly with population of unknown age.

^c Jointly with the capital city of Warsaw.

Illiteracy among the elderly was the legacy of the nineteenth century. The introduction of compulsory schooling in 1919 changed the situation significantly; however, it did not mean the creation of an unobstructed system for all groups (disregarding financial issues, I emphasize the institutional factors). In the 1921/22 school year, 66%

of all children underwent compulsory schooling and in the 1928/29 school year, 96% of all children. However, the system was not fully operational, and the educational reform of 1932 only partly improved the situation. Pursuant to the act, three types of elementary schools were in operation:

a) Level 1: four-year school (education in grade 1 and 2 lasted one year each, in grade 3 – two years, and in grade 4 – three years); this type of school dominated in rural areas, the distance from home to school could not be more than 3 km.

b) Level 2: six-year school (grades 1–5 – one year, grade 6 – two years).

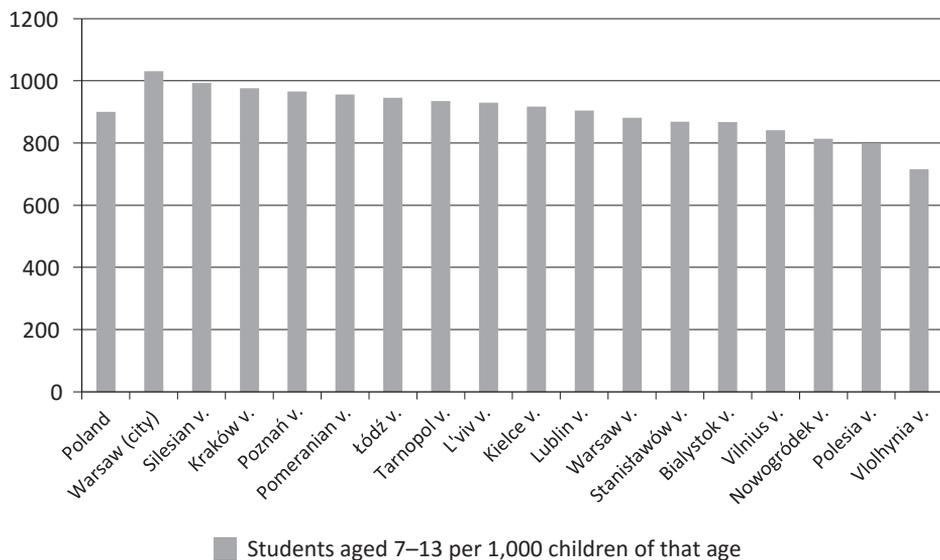
c) Level 3: seven-year school (7 one-year grades, full elementary school curriculum).

Pupils who completed grade 2 and 3 of the elementary school were entitled to go to secondary and occupational schools, which disqualified village children, the vast majority of whom usually completed only the level 1 schools (in 1936/1937 students who completed such schools constituted about 70% of all those attending rural schools). In towns all elementary schools were at least 6-grade (public schools were 7-grade). The reform officially created an equal start for young people, schools were free of charge, each child could learn in a level 2 or 3 school; however, for village children this required additional expenses, such as lodgings. The state at that time was too poor to enable a fully equal start for all. The percentage of children that did not meet compulsory school attendance in the school year 1925/1926 was 20.6%, in 1932/1933 – 10.5%, in 1937/1938 – 10% of all school-age children. Furthermore the situation differed depending on the voivodeship, but this was the result of parental decisions dictated by financial reasons.

The standard of living in interwar Poland is also indirectly documented by demographics relating to health, etc. To some degree this is reflected in the average life expectancy (e_0); in 1930: 48.2 years for men and 51.4 years for women (to compare, Germany had the highest: 59.9 years for men and 62.8 years for women), another was the infant mortality rate which in the second half of the 1930s was 138 mortalities per 1,000 live births (for comparative purposes, in Germany it was 72 mortalities, the ratios in other Western European countries were similar).⁵²

⁵² *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1939*, pp. 48 and 51; United Nations, *Demographic Yearbook 1948*, New York 1948, pp. 388, 404–07 and 517. More, see: C. Kuklo,

Fig. 3. Compliance with the compulsory schooling obligation by voivodeship in the 1937/1938 school year



Source: *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1935*, Warsaw 1935, p. 202; *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1939*, p. 321.

Students irrespective of the school level; the number of children was assessed based on the 1931 census. The larger number of pupils than that of children (Warsaw) results from taking into account the average number of children in the calculations, as well as accepting children from neighbouring voivodeships.

As far as the regional diversity of infant mortality rates is concerned, Polish statistics are far from perfect – they show that eastern voivodeships had the lowest mortality rates(!), and the southern and western ones – the highest.⁵³ This low infant mortality rate in eastern Poland was undoubtedly due to the state of the death registers in Poland's eastern borders and the development of medical services; it could be said that to some extent it reflected the standard of living of the population in these areas *à rebours*.

C. Leszczyńska, J. Łukasiewicz, *History of Poland in numbers*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 91–96.

⁵³ The infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births in the eastern voivodeships in the years 1936–1938 was 128, in central voivodeships 134, in western voivodeships 144, in southern voivodeships 152. See: *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1939*, p. 42.

Conclusions

Interwar Poland was a poor country in which the majority of people (73%) lived in rural areas, and 62% lived off farming (data for 1931). A particularly important socio-economic problem, which had an impact on the standard of living, was the enormous rural overpopulation, with several million superfluous landless petty farmers and farm workers (who in the second half of the 1930s, depending on how numbers were estimated, amounted to 3.5 to 7.0 million people).⁵⁴ Rural overpopulation was one of the major barriers to the modernization processes and had an impact on the poor living conditions of the majority of rural inhabitants. As Juliusz Poniatowski wrote, “It was obvious that the economic strength of the country and its overall well-being depended simply and directly on whether and how the efficiency of production could be increased and the ability to capitalize among this most numerous stratum of the nation [i.e. the rural population].”⁵⁵

Slow economic progress was unable to make a marked improvement in the standard of living, particularly due to the high rate of natural increase (from 15‰ in the second half of the 1920s to 11‰ at the end of the 1930s; the highest growth was noted in eastern voivodeships where it amounted to 18‰ per annum on average in the years 1921–1938). The ratio of industrial production (which in the years 1924–1938 amounted to 3.6% on average, 2.3% per person) placed Poland somewhere in the middle of European rankings.⁵⁶

These circumstances determined the overall low standard of living in interwar Poland. However, the average values do not reflect the marked civilisational differences in this respect between the various social strata or large industrial centres and rural peripheries. The economic structure (particularly the presence of modern industry) determined the wage and income level, which in turn determined the financial status, housing conditions and access to education.

⁵⁴ W. Roszkowski, “Rolnictwo i leśnictwo”, in: *Problemy gospodarcze Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. K. Kozłowski, Warszawa 1989, p. 104; J. Poniatowski, *Cele i założenia reformy rolnej w 20-leciu niepodległości*, Warszawa 2004, p. 20. These were the highest amounts in Europe in absolute terms. See: W. Roszkowski, “Land Reforms in East Central Europe after the First World War”, *Estudios Latinoamericanos*, no. 14, part 2, Instytut Historii PAN, Publ. East European Research Group, Warszawa 1992, p. 232.

⁵⁵ J. Poniatowski, *Cele i założenia reformy*, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Th. David, *Nationalisme économique et industrialization. L'expérience des pays de L'Est (1789–1939)*, Genève 2009, pp. 238 and 240.

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Level of living of Polish citizens in the interwar period,
and its diversification
(Summary)

The problem of the level of living in interwar Poland has not been the subject of separate monographs or syntheses, however, it is one of the topics described in the many monographs of this period. The article analyses the diversification of the level of living of Polish interwar society. The aim is to try to answer the question concerning the scale of this diversification and to show the use of several categories such as income, wages, housing conditions and access to education. Interwar Poland was a poor country in which the majority (73%) lived in rural areas, 62% lived off farming (data for 1931). At the same time, it was a country of enormous income and financial contrasts hence the great diversity of the level of living measured by consumption, housing conditions or access to education at a higher than elementary level.

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