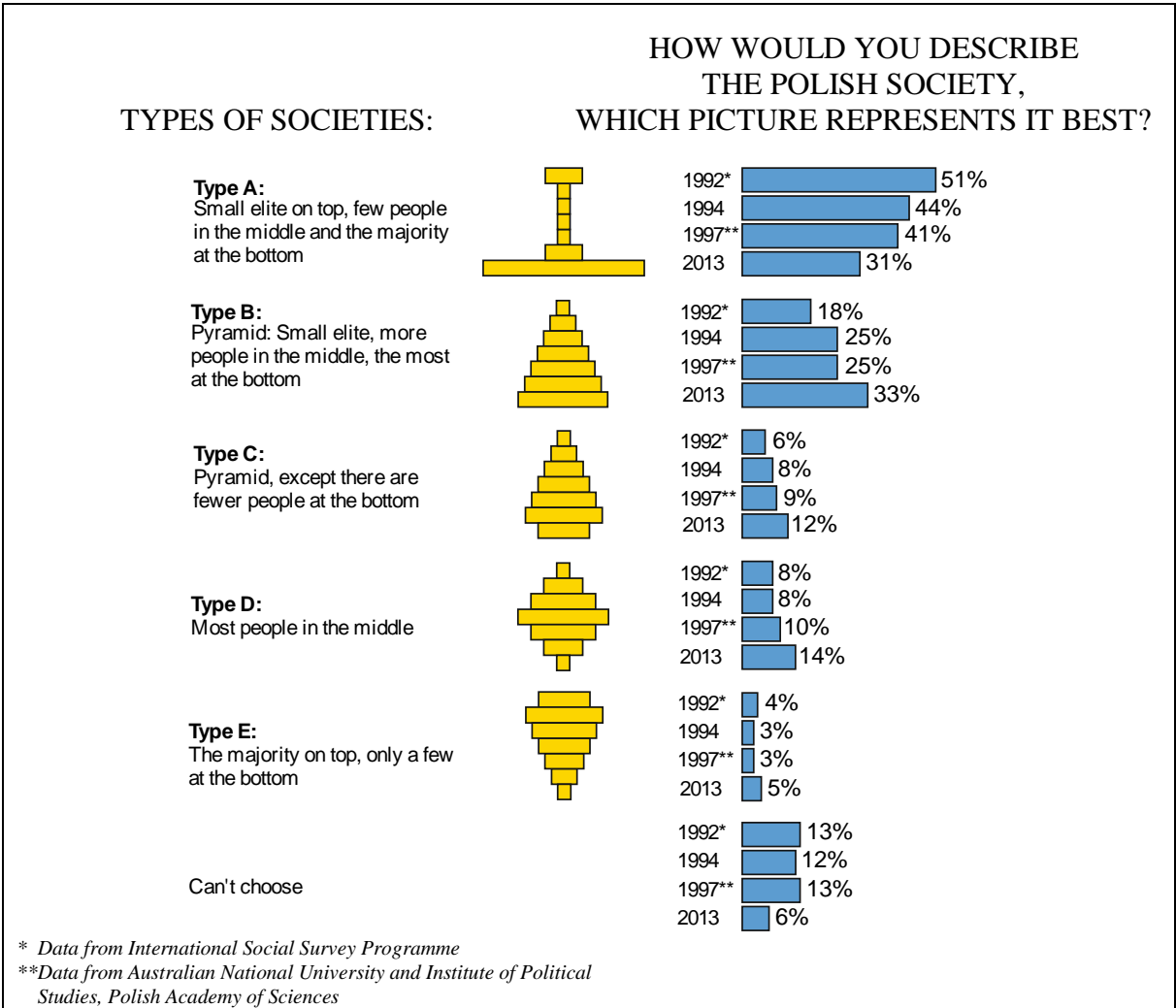


PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Systemic transformation changed the social structure. Econometric analyses prove that the transition period increased economic inequality. The income inequality rose until 2005, as indicated by the Gini coefficient, a commonly used measure of inequality. Since then, according to Eurostat, the values of Gini coefficient fell from 35.6 in 2005 to 30.9 in 2012, approaching the EU average. In 2005-2012, the minimum wage rose from 849 PLN to 1500 PLN (in 2013 it is 1600 PLN), and disposable income per capita rose from 761.46 PLN to 1270.28 PLN (data of Central Statistical Office). Simultaneously, the proportion of people in poverty fell from 20.5% to 17.1%, while the percentage of Poles threatened by social exclusion decreased from 45.3% to 26.7% (Eurostat data).

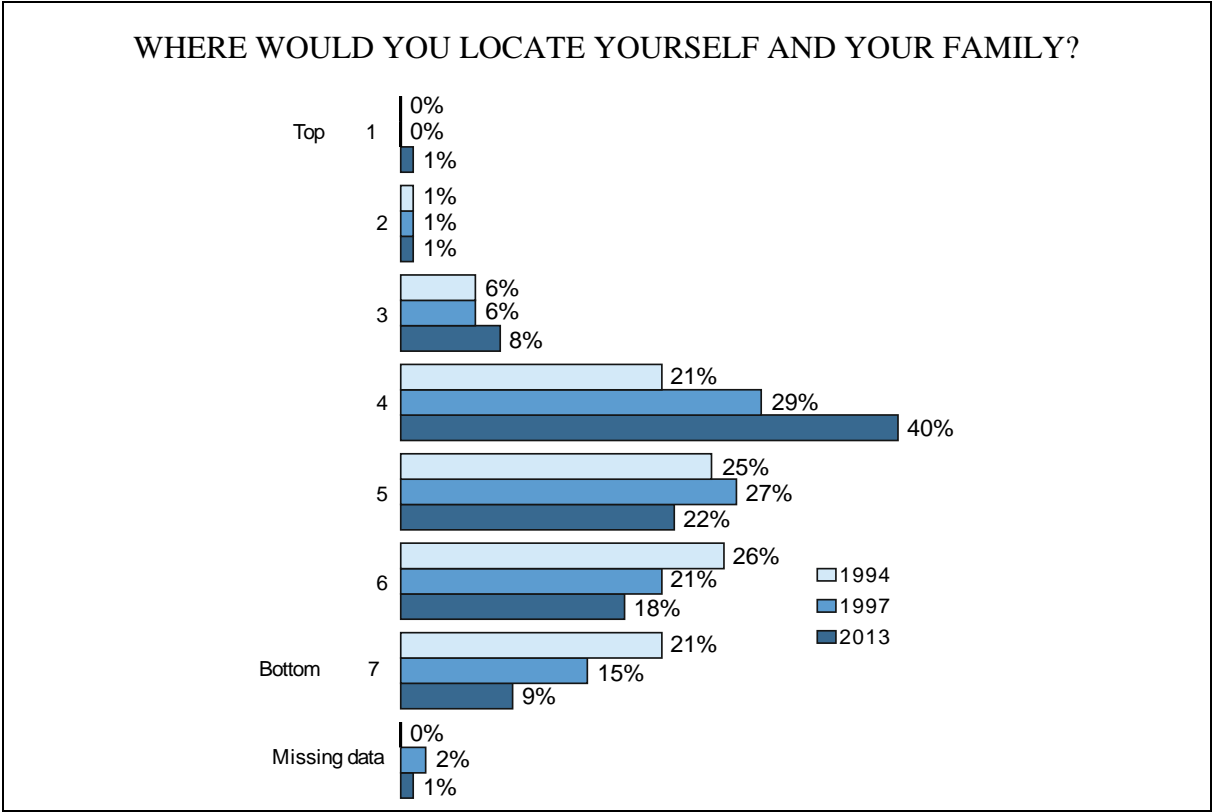
Economic data is confirmed by subjective evaluations of material living conditions. In the first phase of transformation, the number of people with a negative opinion about their material situation rose rapidly, reaching the bottom in the second half of 1991, when over half of respondents thought it was bad, and the proportion of positive evaluations fell below 10%. With time, the opinions started to improve. Starting with the second half of 2006, the number of people satisfied with the material living conditions of their household is larger than the proportion of the dissatisfied. In September 2013, 46% described their living standard as average, 42% thought it was good, and 12% said it was bad.

The improvement in living standard influenced the perception of the social structure compared with the 1990s. The number of people on the lowest levels of the social hierarchy decreased, while the proportion of occupants of higher positions increased. In the 1990s the most commonly selected visual representation of the social structure was the pyramid with a wide base and a crown. It represented the society in which the majority are at the bottom, the intermediate strata are not numerous, and the elite is clearly separated (type A). In 1992, such a characteristic of the Polish society was indicated by 51%, in the second half of 1990s by 41%, and this year by 31%. At present, diversified models of the society, indicating egalitarian relations, are much more frequently chosen to describe the social structure. Nevertheless, Poland is still perceived as a country where the majority of people are in the lower part of the social hierarchy. A third of respondents (33%) compare the Polish society to a pyramid (type B), in which each subsequent higher level is narrower (less numerous) than the one below it. Some respondents (12%) choose the shape of a pyramid (type C) in which the lowest stratum is smaller than the one above.



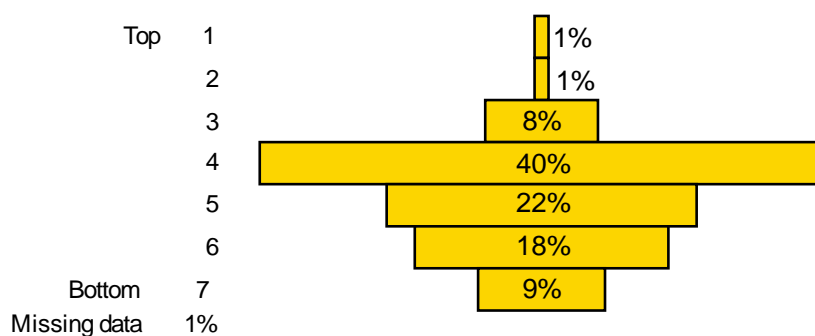
In spite of the changes in perception of the social structure, only a relatively small group of respondents (14%) thinks that the most numerous are the middle strata (type D). The least commonly chosen model was type E, in which the majority of people are on top, and very few at the bottom.

As in the 1990s, respondents were asked to indicate where they would place themselves in the picture they selected. The perceived location in the social structure has improved. Two-fifths of adult Poles (40%, 11 pct. points more than in 1997 and 19 points more than in 1994) locate their families in the middle of social hierarchy. The others tend to see themselves below, rather than above the middle. It is worth noting that only 9% of respondents think they occupy the bottom position, while 15% had this opinion in 1997 and 21% did in 1994. At present, 27% of respondents locate themselves in one of the two bottom layers. The corresponding number in 1997 was 36% and in 1994 it was 47%.



The image of the society created on the basis of self-evaluation of respondents' position in the social hierarchy is better than their idea of the social structure.

THE PICTURE OF THE POLISH SOCIETY CREATED BY SUMMING
THE POSITIONS IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE GIVEN BY RESPONDENTS



Subjective evaluation of the position in the social structure is closely related to the satisfaction with living standard. The better the evaluation, the higher the position in social hierarchy.

More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: *"Perception of social structure"*, October 2013. Fieldwork for national sample: September 2013, N=911. The random address sample is representative for adult population of Poland.