

IN THIS ISSUE:

➤ POLES' FEARS AND ANXIETIES

➤ THE PARTICIPTION OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE - LEGAL GUARANTEES OF SEX EQUALITY

➤ THE UNION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND BELARUS

➤ POVERTY AND WEALTH

PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH CENTER - CBOS -

4a Żurawia
00-503 Warszawa
POLAND

Ph:(48 22) 629 35 69
(48 22) 628 37 04
(48 22) 693 58 94
Fax:(48 22) 629 40 89

E-mail: cbos@pol.pl

http://www.korpo.pol.pl

© COPYRIGHT BY CBOS 1997

ALL SOURCES MUST BE CREDITED WHEN ANY PART OF THIS PUBLICATION IS REPRODUCED

POLES' FEARS AND ANXIETIES

Despite a certain weakening of the tempo of growth, the year 1996 was another year of improvement in the economic condition of the country, the situation on the labour market and the growth in people's real incomes. How did this affect the mental state of Poles, their anxieties and fears?

During the last three years there has been a quite important change in the configuration of the most often indicated sources of fear. Above all the level of importance attached to the fears concerning a lowering of the standard of living enjoyed until now has clearly lessened. The relative significance of the fear of

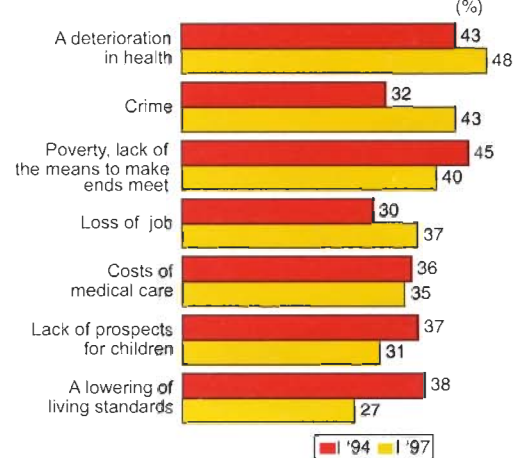
poverty, lack of money to make ends meet and the lack of prospects for children also decreased. On the other hand there was an increase in the importance and frequency of the indications concerning fears about criminal acts and also fears concerning job loss and a worsening state of health. The relative lessening of the significance of threats connected with the material sphere of life shows a growth in the felt improvement in the respondents' material situations. The increased fears concerning crime were encouraged, it would seem, by the increased number of crimes committed in recent years.

The perception of the sources of personal fears and threats is conditioned above all by the life situation of the respondents. The sources of fear linked with the material sphere are mentioned by respondents all the more often the smaller their income. For people who earn the least by far the most often mentioned source of fear continues to be poverty, the lack of the means to make ends meet. The costs of possible medical care and the lack of prospects for children are mentioned in this group as often as is a

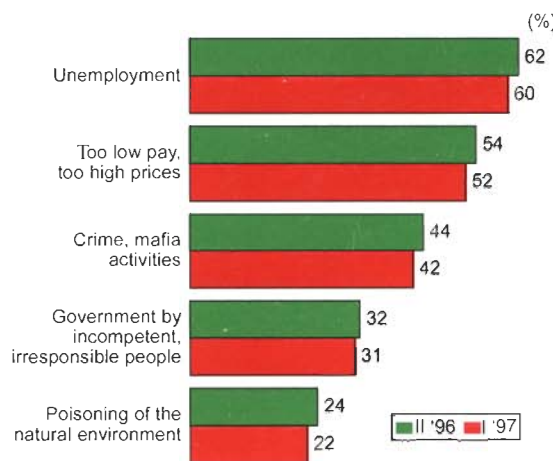
deteriorating state of health. However the lack of a feeling of security in day to day life is spoken of much more rarely. The latter is by far the most often indicated source of fear for those who are best off. It is characteristic that the representatives of this very group more often than the rest fear a lowering of the living standards they have achieved.

There have been few changes compared to last year in perceptions concerning the most important problems for the country. Both the frequency of the indications and the perceived importance of the threat of social anxieties have become smaller. However, the threat of lack of food and social demoralisation were pointed to more often than last year. Respondents have for some years been rating unemployment and excessively low earnings in relation to prices among the most important problems of the country.

WHICH OF THESE MATTERS ARE THE MAIN SOURCE OF ANXIETY/ FEAR FOR YOU? PLEASE CHOOSE NOT MORE THAN THREE ISSUES.



WHICH OF THE PROBLEMS BELOW FACING OUR COUNTRY DO YOU THINK ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT?



THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE - LEGAL GUARANTEES OF SEX EQUALITY

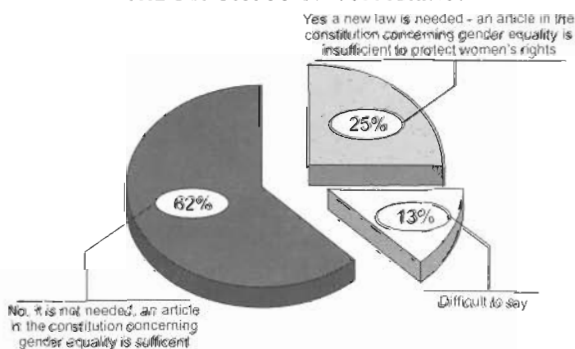
In some western countries legal solutions have been introduced making it possible to increase the participation of women in public life. In Poland as well steps to that end have been taken - the draft law on equal status between men and women.

According to those polled, women should have at least the same level of participation at management level in various organs and institutions as they have had up till now, and a significant percentage would want their role in public life increased. The most numerous groups among the respondents are of the opinion that women are too weakly represented in the government (44%) and in management positions in commerce (42%) and the health service (41%). Poles feel relatively less often that women are insufficiently represented in leading posts in the judiciary (29%), industrial enterprises (31%) and political parties (32%). In comparison with the previous polls (in 1992 and 1995) there is a stronger conviction today that women ought to fill management functions in state enterprises, the state administration, political parties and take up government posts.

People of a higher socio-professional status more often favour an increase of women's influence in public life, in decisions concerning both matters of state and local communities. Respondents of a lower status more often perceive a need to increase the number of women in managerial posts in areas like banking, commerce and the health service.

The fact of women having a smaller level of participation in public life is seen to stem from their greater involvement in carrying out family duties. Significantly fewer people point to the domination of men in these areas of life, the lower degree of interest shown by women in public and professional matters or women's lower self-esteem.

DO YOU THINK THAT A SEPARATE LAW IS NECESSARY GUARANTEEING WOMEN AND MEN THE SAME RIGHTS AND EQUAL TREATMENT IN PUBLIC AND FAMILY LIFE AND ALSO AT WORK, OR IS AN ARTICLE ON EQUAL GENDER RIGHTS IN THE CONSTITUTION SUFFICIENT?



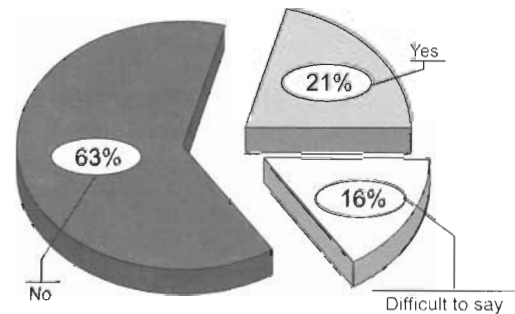
Over two-fifths of those polled think that measures must be taken to increase the participation of women in public life. However it seems that they rather prefer non-legislative forms of activity since only one in four of respondents perceives that there is a need to pass a

separate law guaranteeing women and men equal rights in family and professional life. The majority of respondents, women also, are opposed to this solution, seeing that an article in the constitution on equal general rights is sufficient for protecting women's rights.

People who favoured the introduction of a legal ban on gender discrimination saw as most important the regulations preventing discrimination against women on the job market and ensuring protection from sexual molestation in the workplace and from violence in the family. Most supporters of the law however rejected the proposal to equalise the retirement ages of men and women.

One of the most important and at the same time most controversial paragraphs in the draft law is the guarantee to both sexes, and so in practice to women, of a specified minimum participation in the government and management positions in public institutions. Most respondents are opposed however to legal regulation in this area.

DO YOU THINK THAT IT IS RIGHT FOR THE LAW TO DEFINE WHAT MINIMUM PERCENTAGE OF POSTS WOMEN SHOULD OCCUPY IN THE GOVERNMENT, THE STATE ADMINISTRATION AND THE MANAGEMENT OF IMPORTANT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS?

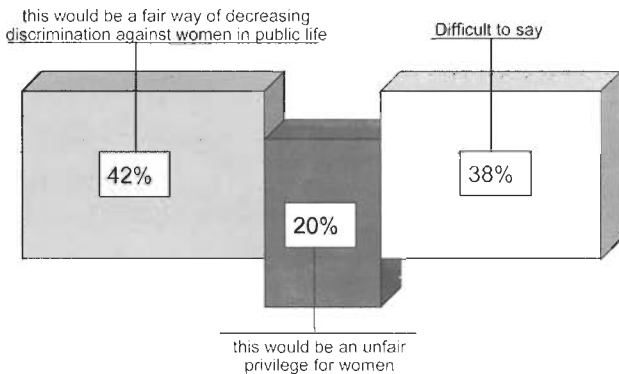


Although most Poles are opposed to legal guarantees for women's percentage participation in various kinds of management structures in public institutions, only a small percentage of respondents (11%) consider that this would end up in a deterioration of the functioning of these institutions. There is a predominant opinion that nothing would change in their operations (45%) and some people are inclined to think that it would tend to improve their work (22%).

The most often noted opinion among respondents (42%) was that parity between the sexes in filling official public posts was a fair way of decreasing discrimination against women. Half that number thought that this amounted to an unfair privilege for women. It is noticeable that there was a significant proportion of the respondents who were not able to form an opinion on this question.

A certain paradox becomes apparent in the thinking of respondents - on the one hand they are opposed to legal guarantees of a percentage of posts in the government and managerial structures of public institutions, on the other they think that the possible introduction of such a law would not hinder the functioning of these institutions, seeing it as a fair way of fighting gender discrimination. The failure to accept this kind of solution therefore has other reasons. The incongruity of the respondents' opinions may result in part from the fact that they are not familiar with the subject matter and do not have views that have been thought through on the question.

IF THE LAW GUARANTEED WOMEN A SPECIFIED PERCENTAGE OF POSTS IN THE GOVERNMENT AND IMPORTANT STATE AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS DO YOU THINK THAT:



Source: CBOS bulletin "The participation of women in public life - legal guarantees of sex equality". February '97.

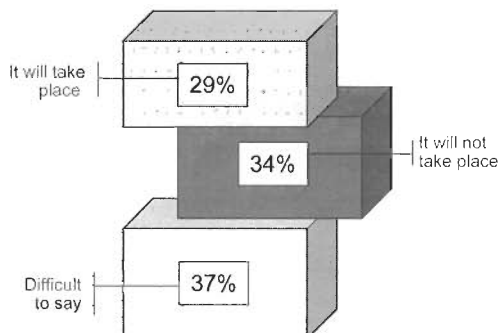
THE UNION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND BELARUS

The problems concerning the situation in Belarus appear every so often in the mass media. The views of President Alexander Lukashenko on union between Russia and Belarus in one state are well known. Only recently government circles in Russia maintained a considerable reserve on this issue. However in mid-January President Boris Yeltsin, who was then in convalescence, officially proposed to Alexander Lukashenko that he carry out a referendum on union between the two states.

Almost three-quarters of adult Poles have heard about the plans of our two eastern neighbours to join together. The youngest respondents know least about the issue whereas the best informed, according to their own assessment, are people with a higher education, and also representatives of management staff and the intelligentsia.

The real possibility of the two countries forming a union is quite sceptically assessed by many respondents. One in three thinks that union between Russia and Belarus will not really take place. However a not much smaller group treats such an eventuality seriously and thinks that sooner or later union between the two states will take place.

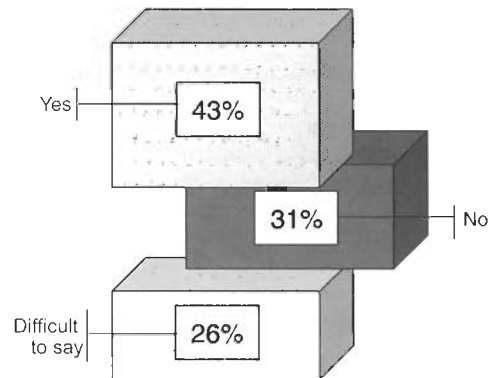
DO YOU THINK THAT UNION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND BELARUS TO FORM ONE STATE WILL REALLY TAKE PLACE?



People who carefully follow international events and are interested in the political situation across our eastern borders think that the integration of Russia and Belarus is more likely. Respondents who do not have any deep knowledge of this subject see the fusion of the two states as being very improbable. People of left-wing views are more often convinced of the inevitability of the union between Belarus and Russia than those who declare right-wing sympathies.

Over two-fifths of those polled accept that the integration of Russia and Belarus might threaten Polish interests, less than one in three respondents is of the opposite opinion.

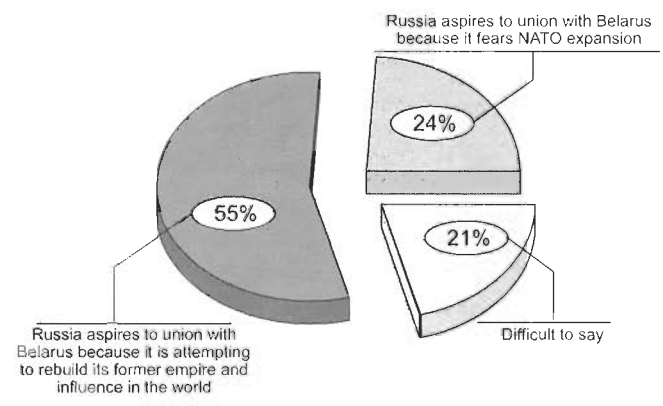
DO YOU THINK THAT UNION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND BELARUS THREATENS THE INTERESTS OF POLAND?



It is above all the people who are best informed about the situation in the East who are convinced that union between Belarus and Russia will be disadvantageous to Poland. The fears concerning the integration of these states are independent of the forecasts about whether it will in fact take place or not.

Over half the respondents think that Russia's aspirations to form a union with Belarus rather results from its desire to rebuild its empire and regain its former influence in the world than from fears connected with the expansion of NATO to include the countries of Central Europe. One can assume that they treat sceptically the declarations of Russian politicians on the fears of the Russian public concerning NATO.

WHICH OF THE STATEMENTS BELOW DO YOU THINK ARE CLOSER TO THE TRUTH?

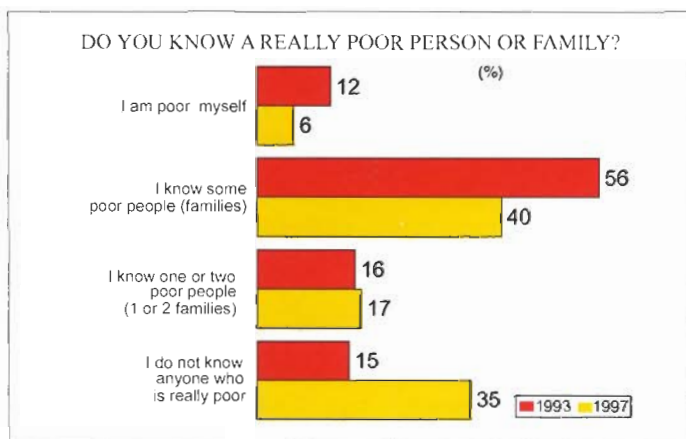


Source: CBOS bulletin "The union between Russia and Belarus". February '97.

POVERTY AND WEALTH

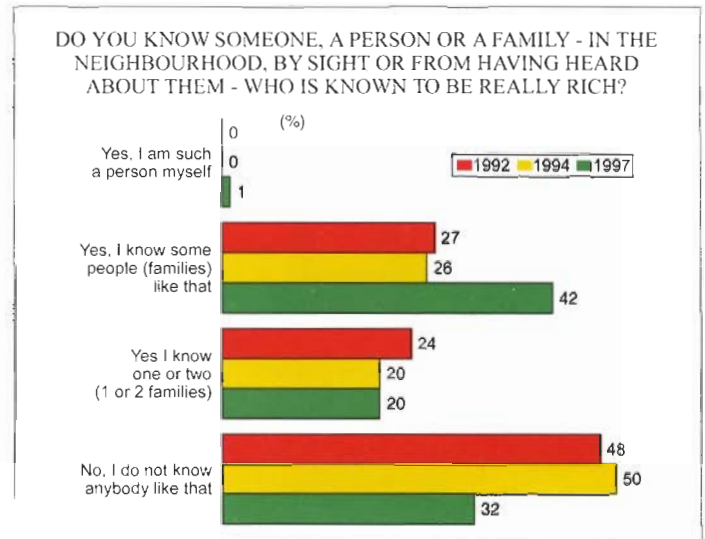
We have been noting for some time a slow but systematic rise in the living standards of Poles. However this does not change the fact that almost two-fifths of respondents place themselves and their families below the average living standards in Poland, of whom 7% say that they live in poverty, unable to meet the basic needs of their families. In the Polish public consciousness, poverty is associated with "absolute destitution" - a person is poor if he or she has insufficient money for bread, maintaining a home, clothing, cleaning articles or health care. In defining poverty, only a few people point to their inability to meet needs connected with education, holidays and the living standards accepted in the surrounding community.

In the last few years the perception of poverty in one's own community has changed. The percentage of respondents personally touched by poverty has decreased (from 12 to 6 percent) - on the one hand the number of those who do not know any poor people has increased (from 15% to 35%) while at the same time more people notice rich people in their own environment (42%). According to the respondents the number of affluent people in Poland in recent years has significantly risen. Over one in four respondents thinks that they make up more than 10% of the population at present, and half think that in the future there will be even more of them.



The respondents see two main reasons for poverty in Poland: the state's social policy which does not ensure people have jobs or adequate social insurance,

and the lack of competence and inability of people to find their way around in the new reality, which condemns them to failure in life.



The social image of rich people has improved - today more than three years ago their wealth is perceived to have resulted from their work and abilities and less often as being due to fraud, wheeling and dealing and evading the law. Among the factors deciding on a fast accumulation of wealth, the most frequently mentioned were courage and the readiness to take risks as well as hard work, and not - as in previous years - ignoring and evading the law or taking advantage of legislative loopholes. The vast majority of respondents (86%) think however that the opportunities of becoming rich are unequal and that only a few people have them.

The acceptance of wealth has grown in recent years - at present the majority of respondents thinks that the fact that some people are significantly more wealthy than others is something natural and beneficial for society. Over one third of Poles see this state of affairs as unfair and the majority (2/3) are of the opinion that the rich do not enjoy the respect and esteem of other people. The reason for the lack of respect for the rich is, according to respondents, above all envy and jealousy on the part of the less affluent and suspicion concerning the **question of the honesty** involved in attaining wealth.

Source: CBOS bulletin "Poverty and wealth". February 97.

In addition to the bulletins referred to above, the following have been published recently:

- The 1997 parliamentary elections - preferences in January
- Women on the division of household duties in the family
- People and animals
- Attitudes to the government in January 1997
- Social moods in January
- Politicians' rankings in January
- Attitudes to public institutions
- My town, region, country. Attitudes to place of residence
- On love, lovers and Valentines' Day
- The functioning of the health service. The government-doctors' conflict
- Parliamentary elections '97 - preferences in February
- Knowledge of the constitution drafts

For more information on CBOS services and publications please contact:

CBOS POLAND
4a, Żurawia, 00-503 Warsaw
Phones: (48 22) 629 35 69, 628 37 04
Fax: (48 22) 629 40 89

E-mail: cbos@pol.pl

<http://www.korpo.pol.pl/cbos>

CBOS expertise in providing professional, accurate and timely research studies has made us the leading authority in political, social, international and consumer research concerning Poland.