

# POLISH PUBLICOPINION Solid and Professional 11/2024

ISSN 2083-1714

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#### **Opinions on nuclear weapons**

The recent change in the Russian Federation's nuclear doctrine has significantly lowered the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons by that country and has revived the discussion on the use of nuclear warheads by the countries of the NATO. Including our country in the "nuclear sharing" program is returning to the Polish public debate, which in its full version would mean the deployment of American nuclear weapons on Polish territory and the certification of Polish aircraft to carry them. In the November survey, we decided to ask Poles whether

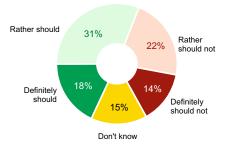
they supported this idea, which was publicly raised by President Andrzej Duda, among others. Opinions on this subject turned out to be extremely divided. The percentage of affirmative answers (44%) is only a few percentage points higher than the share of the negative (40%),

# Should Poland participate in the nuclear sharing program and deploy nuclear weapons on its territory?



and it is among the opponents of this idea that we come across slightly stronger opinions. Rarely does any issue polarize Poles to such a degree, and no position is clearly dominant here.

Should Poland have its own nuclear program in the future, i.e. work on producing its own nuclear weapons?



Even in the most comprehensive version of "nuclear sharing", nuclear weapons deployed in our country would not be our property and Poland would not be able to decide independently about their use. It could therefore be argued that real security would only be available if Poland had its own nuclear weapons. How does society feel about the idea of developing such weapons? The opinions of Poles turned out to be quite divided again,

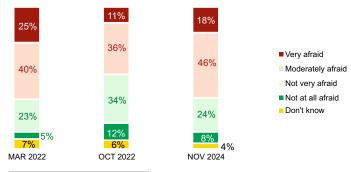
although approval (49%) outweighs the opposition (36%).

Since the outbreak of the full-scale war in Ukraine in February 2022, Russia has repeatedly threatened both Ukraine and Western countries with a nuclear attack. These threats have been made directly to Poland on at least several occasions. The last time was in November 2024, when Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova stated that the opening of the American base in Redzikowo was a provocation and "raises the level of nuclear threat". To conclude the block of questions devoted to nuclear weapons, we decided to ask Poles again how afraid they were of such threats being carried out. We first asked about this shortly after the outbreak of the war, and at that time these fears were shared by the majority of the population (65%). A little over six months later, the percentage of respondents fearing a nuclear attack dropped by almost

20 percentage points to 47%, indicating that repeated and unfulfilled threats from Russians are being taken less and less seriously.

However, the current results show that the level of fear has increased significantly again and is very close to that at the beginning of the war (64%). At the same time, the share of people expressing them in a decisive way is lower than then (18% of respondents have answered "I am very afraid of it" compared to 25% in March 2022). The general increase in fear of an attack is probably related to reports of the worsening situation of Ukrainians on the front. As our September survey showed, Poles' predictions about the end of the war are increasingly pessimistic.

## Are you afraid that Russia might use nuclear weapons against Poland?

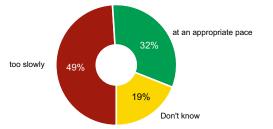


More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: "Opinions on Nuclear Weapons", December 2024. Fieldwork dates for the sample: November 2024, N=981. The random sample is representative for adult population of Poland.

#### **Floods and droughts**

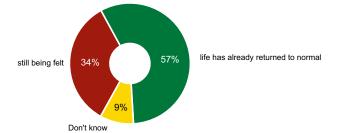
In September, the southwestern regions of Poland experienced floods on a scale comparable to the so-called flood of the millennium in 1997. Losses in the regions affected by the crisis were estimated at billions of PLN, and there were also fatalities. Two months after these events, we decided to ask respondents in areas where someone had suffered from the flood to assess the government's actions related to eliminating its effects. As it turned out, as many as half of them were disappointed with the pace of these actions, although at the same time most respondents admitted that life in their area had already returned to normal.

#### Are the flood damage removal activities being carried out:



Responses of people who claimed that someone in their area had suffered as a result of the recentflood (N=87)

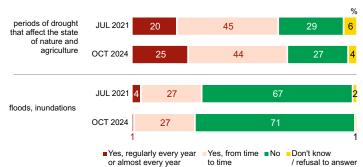
Are the effects of the flood in your area:



Responses of people who claimed that someone in their area had suffered as a result of the recent flood (N=87)

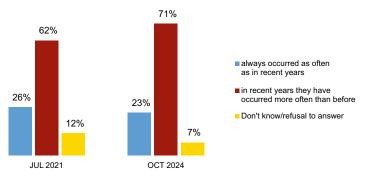
Although the flood was exceptionally devastating, our nationwide survey shows that the opposite problem is much more common throughout Poland, i.e. droughts. Most Poles (69%) have experienced periods of drought in their area, and a quarter observe them regularly every year or almost every year. On the other hand, 28% of respondents have encountered floods and inundations in their area, and only a few see them regularly.

#### Do the following natural disasters occur in your area:



The vast majority of respondents (71%) who claim that droughts affecting the state of nature and agriculture occur in their area indicate that they have been more frequent in recent years than before. Moreover, the percentage of such opinions has increased by 9 percentage points over the last three years. In the case of floods, the belief that they occur as often as before is still dominant, although the share of people who believe that they have occurred more often is not small at all and amounts to 39%, the same as in 2021.

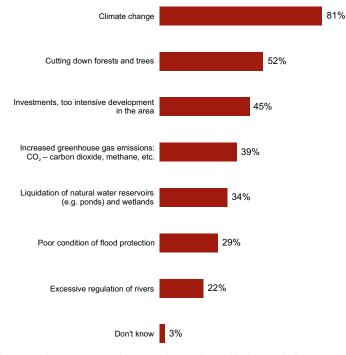
# To the best of your knowledge, have the periods of drought that affect the state of nature and agriculture:



Answers of people who claimed that in their area there are periods of drought that affect the state of nature and agriculture

Respondents who noted an increase in frequency of droughts, floods or inundations were asked what, in their opinion, caused these phenomena to occur more frequently than before. The most common reason for the increase in the frequency of these disasters was climate change (81%). In this context, they also mentioned the cutting down of forests or trees in general (52%), too intensive development in the area (45%), increased greenhouse gas emissions (39%), the elimination of natural water reservoirs and wetlands (34%), poor condition of flood protection (29%) and excessive regulation of rivers (22%).

What causes these disasters to be more frequent now than before?



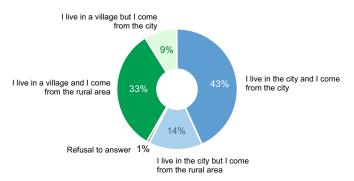
The answers do not sum up to 100 because each respondent could indicate multiple answers. Answers of respondents who claim that periods of drought which affect the condition of nature and agriculture or floods and inundations have increased in frequency in recent years (n=523).

More information about this topic can be found in CBOS Flash report in Polish: "Post-flood Situation – Experiences and Assessments", November 2024 (fieldwork in November 2024 on quota sample representative for adult population of Poland, N=1000) and in CBOS report in Polish "Polish Water Problems A.D. 2024", November 2024 (fieldwork in October 2024 on random sample representative for adult population of Poland, N=1025).

#### City life vs. country life

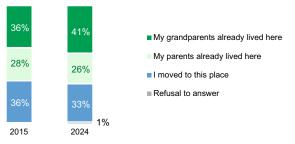
According to data of the Central Statistical Office, in 2023, 15.26 million people lived in rural areas, which constituted 41% of the total population of Poland. Our study conducted in October 2024 showed that the vast majority of this group are people who were born as rural residents. One-seventh moved from a village to a town or city during their life. Only one-eleventh experienced migration in the other direction, i.e. from an urban settlement to a village.

## How would you describe yourself in terms of your place of residence and origin?



We also asked respondents how many generations they had lived in their town. The depth of roots of Poles in their places of residence turned out to be similar to that recorded nine years ago. The biggest difference is that, currently, more people live in the same town as their grandparents (up by 5 pct. points). About one-third are migrants, a quarter are people belonging to the second generation of residents of a locality, and slightly over onethird are rooted in that place for at least two generations.

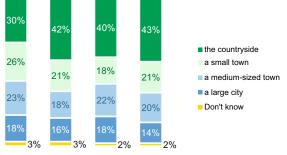
# How long has your family been connected with your place of residence?



The relatively strongest roots are characteristic of villages and small towns. A comparison with data from previous measurements shows that, especially in small towns, the percentage of the most "rooted" residents (living there for at least two generations) has clearly increased over the last decade, while the share of newcomers has fallen. For years, people have been writing, not only in Poland, about the crisis of small towns and their depopulation, especially concerning peripheral towns that are not in the orbit of large urban centres. It is therefore not surprising that CBOS studies also note this phenomenon. We also noticed its symptoms in our qualitative study from last year (Barometer of Small Towns, 2023). It turned out then that in some of the smallest towns, older people and their needs played an increasingly important role. Young people do not see a future for themselves in a town that focuses mainly on the needs of older people, so they look for a different place to live. In this way, two parallel depopulation trends occur, i.e. the dying out of the older generation and the tendency of the young to leave their hometowns. They simultaneously contribute to the strong depopulation trend of this group of towns.

We also asked Poles where they would like to live if it depended solely on them. Almost half (43%) would most like to live in the countryside. It is worth noting that in 1997 this percentage was significantly lower and amounted to 30%.

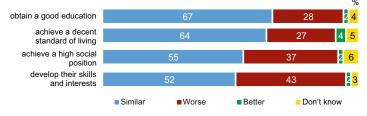
# If you had the opportunity to choose where to live, would you prefer to live in:



OCT 1998 JUL 2006 JAN 2015 OCT 2024

Who has a better life– people in the city or in the countryside? Who has better access to education, greater opportunities for individual development or achieving a high social position? In all matters, the prevailing opinion is that the life chances of people from the countryside and the city are similar. To the greatest extent this applies to education and material living conditions: around two-thirds of respondents indicate such an answer. With less certainty (around 50%), respondents see the equality of opportunities for city and village residents in terms of individual development and the possibility of achieving a high social position.

### Do people from rural areas currently have the same opportunities as people from cities to:



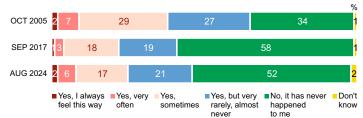
Sociodemographic analysis shows that among residents of large cities, the stereotype of lower life chances for people living in the countryside is more commonly shared than among residents of rural areas. The view that people from villages and cities have the same chances of obtaining a good education is expressed by 68% of respondents living in the countryside or in a small towns, including the vast majority (77%) of farmers. However, only 47% of residents of large cities express this opinion. Similar differences can be observed in the case of other issues.

More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: "Where do we Come from, Where do we Live, Where do we Want to Live?", November 2024. Fieldwork dates for the sample: September 2024, N=1025. The random sample is representative for adult population of Poland.

#### Loneliness

After a seven-year break, we addressed the issue of loneliness in our study. The COVID-19 pandemic, increasing digitalization, and the growing popularity of social media have not been conducive to maintaining direct interpersonal relationships. The share of respondents who experience loneliness very often or always, even despite the presence of other people nearby, has doubled since 2017 from 4% to 8% currently. We recorded a similar share of people experiencing loneliness very often or permanently in 2005. At that time, loneliness was generally more common – only 34% did not feel it at all, compared to 52% currently and 58% in 2017.

Do you ever find yourself in situations when, despite being surrounded by other people, you still feel lonely?



Factors that contribute to experiencing loneliness include young age (up to 34 years old), living in a large city, being single, and dissatisfaction with one's financial situation. Political views also proved to be important in this context. As the analyses show, people with centrist, right-wing, and unspecified political views are less likely to feel lonely than those identifying with the left.

More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: "Who is most at Risk of Loneliness?", November 2024. Fieldwork dates for the sample: August 2024, N=939. The random sample is representative for adult population of Poland.

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Circulation: 50 copies

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