

Overview of socio-economic status of women in Poland

Przegląd sytuacji społeczno-ekonomicznej kobiet w Polsce

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Wprowadzenie. W piśmiennictwie naukowym coraz większą uwagę zwraca się na wpływ statusu społeczno-ekonomicznego (SSE) na zdrowie kobiet i nierówności w zdrowiu na podłożu genderowym. Stanowi to ważną przesłankę do oceny SSE kobiet w Polsce.

Cel. Analiza SSE kobiet w Polsce w aspekcie ich sytuacji na rynku pracy, tj.: poziomu wykształcenia i aktywności zawodowej, wykonywania pracy płatnej i zarobków, sytuacji ekonomicznej na emeryturze, dyskryminacji w miejscu pracy.

Materiały i metody. Poziom wykształcenia i aktywność zawodową oceniano na podstawie danych GUS. Analizę porównawczą zarobków kobiet i mężczyzn prowadzono na podstawie wybranych raportów, w tym Diagnozy Społecznej 2013 oraz Ogólnopolskiego Badania Wynagrodzeń (Sedlak & Sedlak). Pozycję kobiet na najwyższych poziomach zarządzania opisano na podstawie danych Fundacji Liderów Biznesu. Analizowano różnice w wysokości emerytur kobiet i mężczyzn oraz zjawisko dyskryminacji w miejscu pracy na podłożu genderowym.

Wyniki. Kobiety są lepiej wykształcone od mężczyzn, ale ich pozycja na rynku pracy jest gorsza. W 2013 r. wskaźnik aktywności zawodowej kobiet był niższy niż mężczyzn (odpowiednio 48,5 vs. 64,4%). Różnice w zarobkach obu płci, z korzyścią dla mężczyzn, występują niemal we wszystkich grupach zawodowych. Według danych GUS w 2014 r. średnie miesięczne wynagrodzenie brutto kobiet wynosiło 3717,5 PLN, a mężczyzn 4481,7 PLN. Zarazem średnia emerytura kobiet była niższa niż mężczyzn. Stwierdzono liczne przejawy dyskryminacji w miejscu pracy, w tym mobbing oraz molestowanie seksualne.

Wnioski. Pod wieloma względami sytuacja kobiet na rynku pracy w Polsce jest gorsza niż mężczyzn. Istnieje potrzeba poprawy tej sytuacji, co powinno być wynikiem polityk wielosektorowych, które są spójne z działaniami międzynarodowymi.

Słowa kluczowe: nierówności społeczne, rynek pracy, dyskryminacja ze względu na płeć, nierówności w zdrowiu

Introduction. Scientific literature presents an increasing interest in the impact of socioeconomic status (SES) on women's health and gender-based health inequalities. This encourages to evaluate SSE of women in Poland.

Aim. To analyze women's SES in Poland in terms of their situation on the labor market in Poland, i.e.: the education level and professional activity, paid work and income, economic situation of retired women, discrimination in the workplace.

Material & Method. The level of education and professional activity were evaluated on the basis of the Central Statistical Office (CSO) data. The comparative analysis of women's and men's income was carried out on the basis of selected reports, including Social Diagnosis 2013 and The National Salary Study 2013. The data on women's position on the top of managerial ladder were obtained from the Business Woman Leaders Foundation report. Pay gap of pensions for women and men and the gender-based discrimination in the workplace were also shown.

Results. Although women are better educated than men, their labor market position is worse than the men's. In 2013 the women's professional activity rate was lower than the men's (48.5 vs. 64.4%). The gender-based income differences favor men in almost all socio-professional groups. According to the CSO data, in 2014 an average monthly gross wage for female employees amounted to 3717.5 PLN and for males – 4481.7 PLN. Also the average monthly women's pensions were much lower than the men's. A number of instances of discrimination in the workplace, including mobbing and sexual harassment, were found.

Conclusion. In many aspects women's situation on the labor market in Poland is worse than men's. The improvement of women's position is required and it should take into account cross-sectoral policies coherent with international activities.

Key words: social inequalities, labour market, gender-based discrimination, income, health inequalities

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Introduction

In Poland and other EU countries, women live longer than men, but their health and quality of life

are worse. These differences are illustrated by, among others, the Healthy Life Years (HLY) calculated for the European countries, the declaration of the long-stand-

ing illness, health problems or chronic diseases and health self-assessment [1-4]. This can be perceived as an example of gender-based health inequality.

The phenomenon of gender-based health inequalities have numerous genetic/biological, behavioral, social, economic and political causes [5, 6]. Scientific literature presents an increasing interest in the impact of socioeconomic status (SES) on women's health and gender-based health inequalities. SES is generally determined by income, level of education and the occupation. Currently, there is ample evidence that SES influences women's health, the health of their children and families. For example – low women's SES is one of the most important predictors of depression, low participation in mammography screening programs, lower concern with the body weight control, increased mortality due to heart diseases or violence against women [7]. As the gender gap in health is strongly related to social and economic status it is important to examine the women's SES in Poland.

Aim

The purpose of the paper is to present selected aspects of women's SES in Poland. The present analysis covers women's situation on the labor market in Poland, i.e.: a. the education level and professional activity; b. paid women's work including women's participation in the management of listed companies and unpaid home work; c. economic situation for/of retired women; d. discrimination in the workplace.

Material and method

The level of education and professional activity was assessed on the basis of the Central Statistical Office (CSO) data. The activity rate of men and women defines the percentage of the professionally active (currently working or active job seekers) in the total population to a given category (LFS – Labour Force Survey).

Gainful women's work was evaluated by: the average gross wage (CSO data), the average monthly personal net income for different professional groups, and the proportion of personal income for men and women (Social Diagnosis 2013). The information on the median of total gross pay at different levels of management was obtained from the "National Salary Study 2013" and the percentage of women in the leadership for listed companies from the "Business Woman Leaders Foundation" report. The data regarding the situation of retired women was obtained from the "Polish Women 50 plus Report. Health and its Threats." The information on discrimination in the workplace was obtained from the "Report on the Situation of Female Workers in Super and Hypermarkets".

Results

Level of education and professional activity

Although Polish women are better educated than men [8], it does not give them a stronger position on the labor market (Tab. I). Over the years, the professional activity rate of women in Poland was lower than the men's and amounted to 47.5% in 2010 and 48.5% in 2013 (Tab. II) [9, 10].

Table I. Level of education of Poles aged 13 years and older by gender as of Dec 31, 2014 – study based on CSO estimations by balance method [8]
Tabela I. Poziom wykształcenia Polaków w wieku 13 lat i więcej – wg płci i stanu w dniu 31.12.2014 r. – opracowanie własne na podstawie szacunków GUS metodą bilansową [8]

| Level of education /Poziom wykształcenia | Women /Kobiety % | Men /Mężczyźni % |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|
| higher /wyższe | 27.1 | 19.3 |
| secondary and postsecondary /średnie i policealne | 34.5 | 31.2 |
| basic vocational /zasadnicze zawodowe | 15.2 | 28.2 |
| lower secondary /gimnazjalne | 4.3 | 5.8 |
| primary completed /podstawowe ukończone | 18.9 | 15.5 |

Table II. Professional activity rate of population in Poland divided by gender (in percentages for each gender) in 2010-2013 – study based on CSO data [9, 10]
Tabela II. Współczynnik aktywności zawodowej ludności – wg płci w latach 2010-2013 – na podstawie danych GUS [9, 10]

| Year /Rok | Women /Kobiety % | Men /Mężczyźni % | Difference between men and women /Różnica między mężczyznami a kobietami % |
|--------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| 2010 | 47.5 | 63.9 | 16.4 |
| 2011 | 48.0 | 64.2 | 16.2 |
| 2012 | 48.3 | 64.4 | 16.1 |
| 2013 | 48.5 | 64.4 | 15.9 |

Paid and unpaid women's work

According to the CSO data in 2014 the average monthly gross wage for employed females amounted to PLN 3717.5 and to PLN 4481.7 for males [11]. According to the data obtained from the "Social Diagnosis 2013", the difference between women's and men's income existed in almost all groups of socio-professional, inactive professional and unemployed people (applies to income from benefits), pupils/students, pensioners, farmers, entrepreneurs, private and public sector employees. Among professional groups which were analyzed, the biggest disproportion involved: specialists; machinery or equipment operators and assemblers; and government representatives, senior state officials and managers (Fig. 1) [12].

While comparing men's and women's income attention needs to be drawn to an inferior position of women in most analyzed professional groups (Fig. 2).

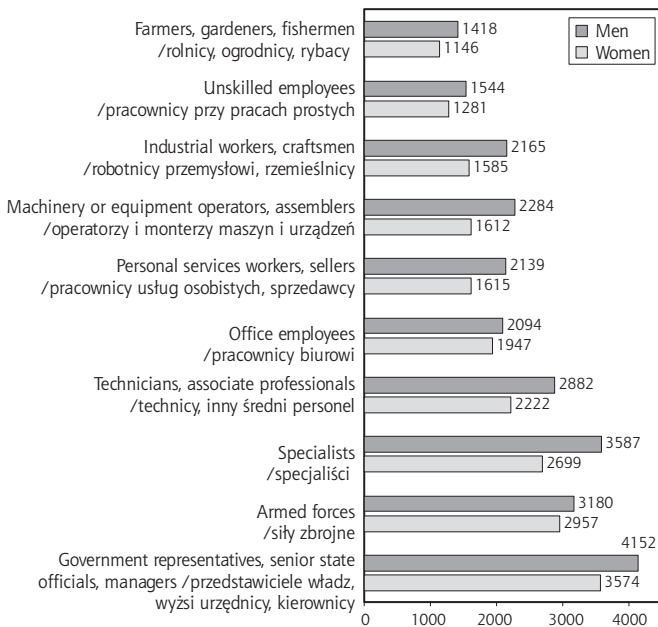


Fig. 1. The average monthly personal men and women net income for different professional groups (in PLN) – study based on Social Diagnosis 2013 data [12]

Ryc. 1. Przepiętny miesięczny dochód osobisty netto kobiet u mężczyzn w różnych grupach zawodowych – opracowanie własne na podstawie Diagnozy Społecznej 2013 [12]

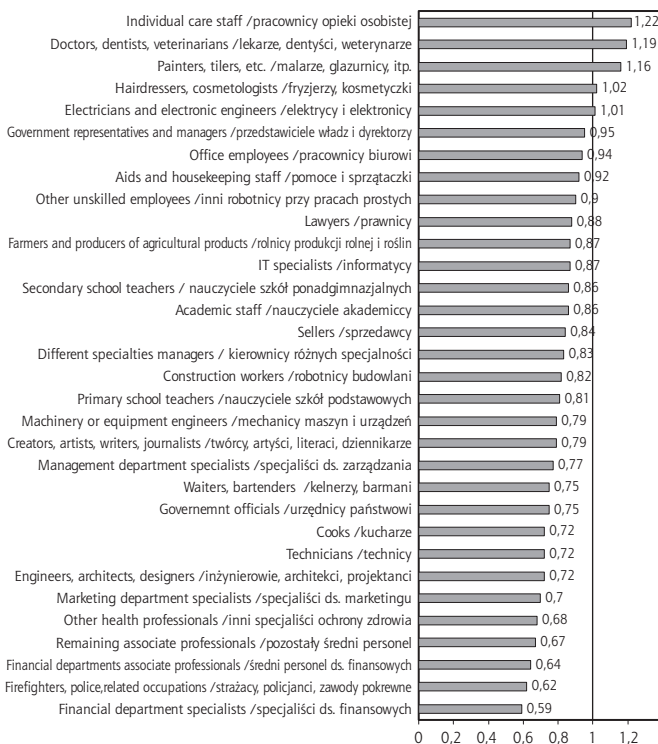


Fig. 2. Proportion of women's personal net income compared to men's for different professional groups taking into consideration age and number of years of education – study based on Social Diagnosis 2013 data [12] (*vertical line indicates the earnings level of men in a particular occupational group)

Ryc. 2. Proporcja dochodu osobistego netto kobiet do dochodu mężczyzn w różnych grupach zawodowych przy kontroli wieku i liczby lat nauki – opracowanie własne na podstawie Diagnozy Społecznej 2013 [12] (*linia pionowa wskazuje poziom zarobków mężczyzn w poszczególnej grupie zawodowej)

The “National Salary Study in 2013” conducted by Sedlak & Sedlak shows that the biggest difference in salaries is at the highest management levels – among directors or board members [13]. The median difference in men's and women's gross salaries amounted to PLN 3200 (women earned 23% less) for this group in 2013. For the managers' group the gross pay gap was smaller and amounted to PLN 700 (11% less). For specialists the women's gross earning was about PLN 800 less than the men's (17% less). The smallest gross salary gap was found among regular employees and amounted to PLN 220 (0.8% less) (Fig. 3).

At the same time it is known that women represent a small percentage of the people who are CEOs of listed companies (Fig. 4) [14].

The aspect which contributes to women's situation on the labor market is men's low participation in fulfilling family duties (unpaid work for women) [15]. According to the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Affairs in 2015 (third quarter) up to 29.7% of women in Poland were professionally passive. Among

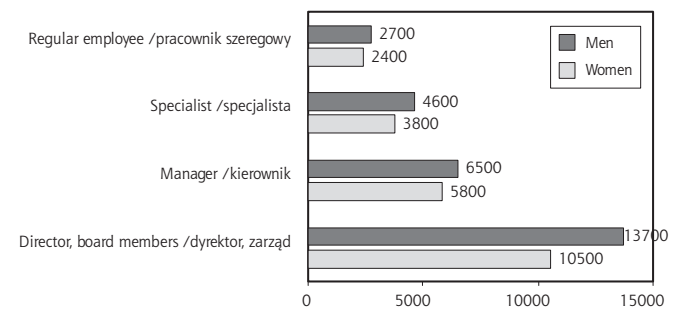


Fig. 3. Median total gross salaries for men and women at different levels of employment in 2013 in PLN – study based on National Salary Study 2013 [13]

Ryc. 3. Mediana wynagrodzenia całkowitego brutto kobiet i mężczyzn na różnych zatrudnienia – opracowanie własne na podstawie Ogólnopolskiego Badania Wynagrodzeń [13]

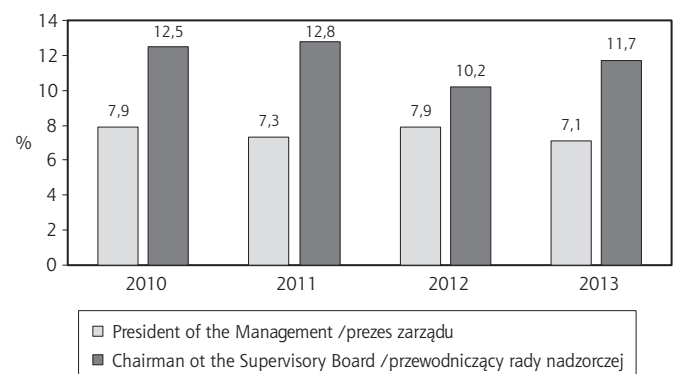


Fig. 4. Proportion of women in management of listed companies in Poland between 2010-2013 (Authors' own calculation based on Business Woman Leaders Foundation data) [14]

Ryc. 4. Odsetek kobiet w kierownictwie spółek giełdowych w Polsce w latach 2010-2013 – opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Fundacji Liderki Biznesu [14]

them, almost a half (41.2%) reported domestic responsibilities and duties associated with home maintenance as a cause of professional inactivity [16].

The economic situation of retired women

The average amount of women's pensions in Poland is much lower than the men's. In 2014 up to 11.5% of women as compared to 4.5% of men received the lowest pensions (i.e. up to PLN 1,200). Pensions in the range up to 1.200.01-1.600.00 PLN were received by 20.2% of men and 30.3% of women. In the group of people receiving the highest pensions, i.e. above 3000 PLN, men accounted for 24.2% and women for 5.2% [17]. It should be noted that Polish women live about 8 years longer than men [18].

Women's discrimination in the workplace

A study conducted in 2009 in various Polish supermarkets and hypermarkets indicated, among others, the following problems: ignoring the needs of employees, employer's reluctance to grant leave, overuse of orders to perform tasks exceeding employee's physical abilities, blackmailing and humiliation. These studies have shown that rights of persons are violated, and the system of their protection fails. This problem concerned women, who represent around 90% of supermarket employees [19].

One of the manifestations of women's discrimination in the workplace is mobbing, i.e. "action or behavior relating to an employee or directed against the employee, involving a persistent and prolonged harassment or intimidation of the employee, causing his or her low self-esteem of professional usefulness, causing or intended to humiliate or ridicule the employee, isolating or eliminating him or her from the co-workers team" (Article 94 of the Labor Code) [20]. There is no system for monitoring of these phenomena, and it is difficult to estimate their extent in Poland. Research into the prevalence of bullying is also conducted rarely. This problem affects both sexes but the results of international studies suggest that women are more vulnerable than men [21].

Sexual harassment is another form of discrimination on the grounds of sex, i.e. "any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or relating to the employee's sex with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of an employee in particular the creation to him or her intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive ambience; this behavior may consist of physical, verbal or non-verbal elements" (Article 18 of the Labor Code) [20].

The research of the "National Labor Inspection" shows that in 2012 only 11 complaints related to sexual harassment were filed. In 2013 in courts all

over Poland 20 cases of harassment at workplace were pending. In the total period of six years (2007-2012) 152 such trials began, 65 of which were filed in 2011. This theme is virtually unexplored and there is also lack of specialized institutions that could help people exposed to sexual abuse in the workplace [22]. However, the report of the International Labor Organization shows that 40 to 90% of women experience sexual abuse during their working life [23].

Discussion

The presented data shows that women's situation on the labor market in Poland is significantly worse than that of men. It happens despite the existence of legal guarantees of gender equality in the sphere of work.

In Polish labor market for many years there has existed the horizontal segregation (division into men's and women's occupations) as well as the vertical one (stereotyping certain masculine and feminine qualities, which affects the promotion of vertical structure, so-called 'glass ceiling'). For years there has existed the pay gap between men and women for the same work or women's longer job hunting (and joblessness) [24]. The labor market, however, is only one of many spheres of social life where treatment of men and women is unequal. Nevertheless – it is a very measurable sphere.

The situation of women in the labor market in Poland is significantly worse than in other European Union countries. According to the Health Equality Index 2015 Poland occupies 19th place among the 28 EU countries in terms of overall indicator of gender equality and up to 24 in terms of equality in the domain of work [25].

The World Health Survey 2002-2004 (57 countries, 103.154 men, 125.728 women) showed that having paid employment and a higher level of household income were associated with a better assessment of the health condition for both women and men [26]. Social and economic conditions, including having paid employment, have a significant effect on the maintenance and improvement of health condition [27-30].

It should be emphasized that broadly understood issues of equality and equity in the gender context in different spheres of life have become a subject of interest on the international stage in the 1950s. An important step in the development of gender equality policy was the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979 [31], which was ratified by Poland in 1980 [32].

Since the 1990s we have observed intensification of global activism on gender equality which is

commonly considered to be a *sine qua non* condition for sustainable economic and social development but also as an improvement of women's, children's and the general population's health. These efforts require cross-sectoral activities. Milestones of this movement have been taken under the UN auspices: the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) [33], the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing, 1995) [34] and the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (2000; MDGs) [35, 36]. One of the eight MDGs concerned gender equality and women's empowerment. During the period of MDGs implementation, namely between 2000-2015, some progress can be recorded concerning women's equality in the field of education, employment and political representation. Nevertheless, inequalities persist, among others, in the legal sphere and the practices of law implementation, participation in decision-making, control of property, violence against women and girls, opportunities in the labor market, as well as sharing unpaid housework [36]. 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were adopted for the period of 2016 to 2030 by the UN General Assembly in September last year [37] are the continuation and expansion of MDGs. The WHO has provided strong support for MDGs and is currently implementing the "Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescent's Health" as an instrument to achieve SDGs. The European countries which have implemented this strategy are only (in al-

phabetical order): Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Norway and the United Kingdom [38].

The issue of gender equality is also prominent in Europe. The examples of the Council of Europe's activities are: Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence [39], Strategy on Gender Equality 2014-2017 [40], Council recommendations and standards of operation [41] and guidance on methods of action [42].

Significant activities in this area are also taken by the European Union, as evidenced by, among others, directives of 1976 and 2002 of equal treatment in employment and vocational training [43], also the Strategy for equality between women and men from 2010 to 2015 [44] or its continuation for the period of 2016-2019 [45]. The EU policies bring to the fore the issues of equal economic independence, equal pay for the same work and equality in decision-making processes. Since 2006, the European Commission at the Spring European Council have been reporting annually on progress in implementing gender equality in the EU Member States and presenting future challenges and priorities [46].

Conclusion

In many aspects women's situation on the labor market in Poland is worse than men's. The improvement of women's position is required and it should take into account cross-sectoral policies coherent with international activities.

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