

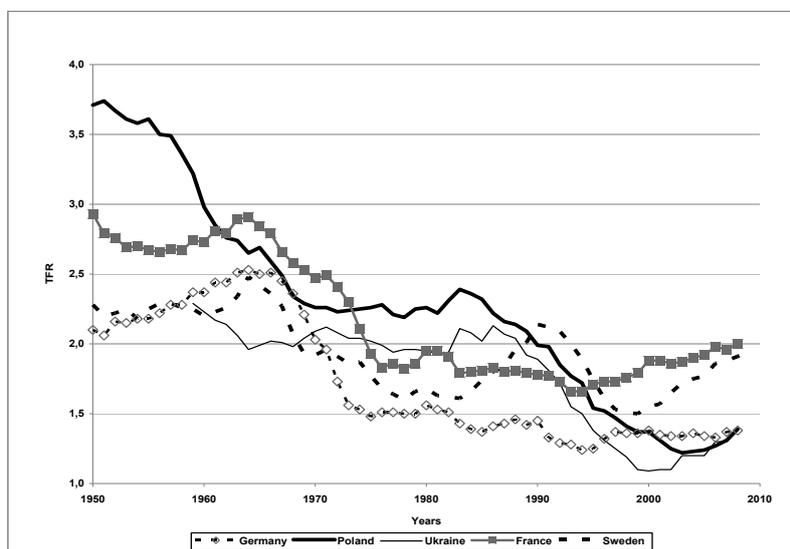
**AN ASSESSMENT OF POPULATION DEVELOPMENT IN WESTERN POLAND  
IN THE LIGHT OF THE 2ND DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION**

*After 1990 there are new trends in Polish demography (new forms of marriage and family life). Evaluation of these phenomena in Polish Western lands is the subject of our paper.*

**Keywords:** *second demographic transition, timing of marriage, deinstitutionalization of marriage, hypothetical cohorts, total nuptiality rate, non-marital birth rate.*

The demographic potential of western and northern Poland was created as a result of mass migration in the post-war period, a specific type of migration in later years and a significant degree of regional independence in terms of population dynamics, which has been observed until now. As S. Wierchosławski (1995, p. 127) rightly observed, the unique character of the settlement process in the western and northern regions was due to the participation of many "ethnographic" groups, with various cultural roots and different degrees of demographic development. According to

S. Wierchosławski, it can be compared to the settlement of America, Australia, Israel or Syberia. In 2010 chief executives (Pol. *marszałek województwa*) of 5 provinces of western Poland (PL5 and PL6 regions) reached an accord on joint efforts to develop a strategy and operational plan for the development of western Poland. The Center for Regional Statistics of the Poznań University of Economics is involved in developing a 2020 forecast for this region, see J. Paradyś, K. Paradyś, J. J. Sztudynger (2011). The present paper is part of this work.



**Fig. 1. Total fertility rates (TFR) in Poland and in selected countries in the period of 1950-201**

Source: own elaboration based on the INED database in Paris

In terms of the general demographic situation, Poland is not much different from other European countries. Between 1950 and 1989 Poland was characterised by one of the largest annual growth rates of over 1%, which would have been even higher but for a few migration outflows: after 1956, 1968 and in 1980-1989. There is no doubt that the last 5 years following Poland's entry into the European Union, has been marked by a significant population outflow in search of better job opportunities. In recent years Poles have moved to Ireland and the United Kingdom to work. It should be noted, then, that a slight decline in Poland's population has been accompanied by a significant increase in the population of Ireland, annually at 2%, which is understandable, considering the disproportion between the populations of both countries.

In order to assess demographic development prospects of European regions, it is essential to conduct an analysis of the frequency and timing of marriage. The second demographic transition, which began in Scandinavian countries in the 1960s, was initiated by changes in marriage patterns. In the 1970s, the demographic transition reached Western Europe, later on Southern Europe and in the 1990s, Eastern Europe.

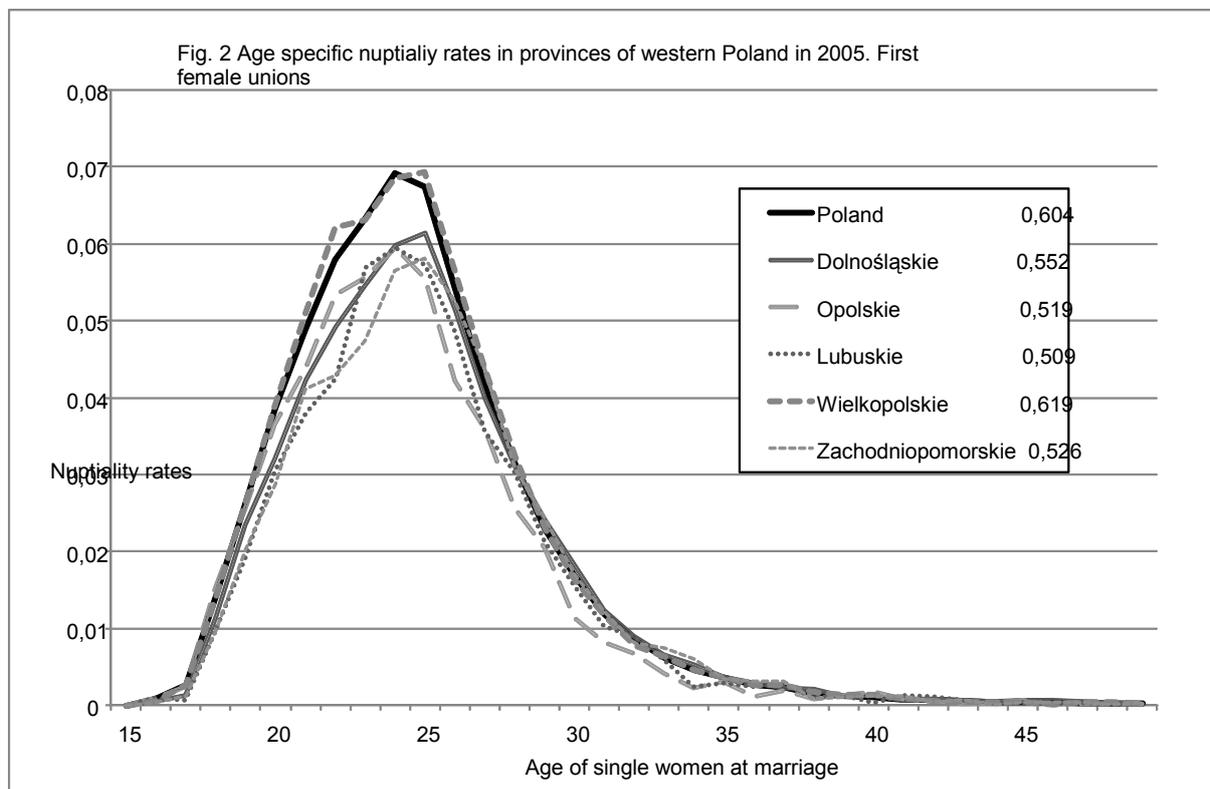
The second demographic transition was characterised by desacralisation of marriage, deinstitutionalization of marriage, and the role conflict of career women. The next stage of the second demographic transition involved the deinstitutionalization of marriage, preceded by a growing tolerance of consensual unions, which has led to the general acceptance of the practice of cohabitation.

Another feature of new demographic trends in Europe is the growing average childbearing age and decline in fertility. It can be said that the second demographic transition model describes the following life cycle: during the first stage, on leaving their family home, young people enter casual relationships. This is followed by a search for stable partners, and cohabitation with marriage-like rights. Out-of-wedlock births are increasingly common. The next stage in the cycle involves obtaining a certified marriage license. In recent years, the percentage of cohabiting couples in Poland has been growing fast. This is evidenced by the rise in the average childbearing age and the nonmarital birth rate, which has exceeded 20% at the national level, but has reached as much as 70% in some districts of the Zachodniopomorskie province. It seems that

the demographic processes mentioned earlier on are still at work, and western Poland, owing to its geographic location, is at the forefront of these demographic transformations.

In the analysis of nuptiality of single males and females, one can observe a significant fall in marriage rate in the transversal approach by hypothetical cohorts since 2005. Total Nuptiality Rate (TNR) is used here as a synthetic measure. TNR is particularly significant for single males and females, since in most cases it means the formation of

new social units: families and households. Figure 2 shows female TNR in 2005 for all the 5 provinces of western Poland and for the whole of Poland. TNRs in Figure 2 and subsequent ones are provided in the legend, next to the relevant province name. For first marriages, in the transversal approach by hypothetical cohorts, TNR can be higher than 1, or percentage-wise, exceed 100. This kind of situation could be observed in developed countries in the 1950s, which was a direct result of the "baby boom".



In 2005 TNR in western Poland for single men and women declined to an extremely low level. In particular, this can be seen with respect to 3 provinces: opolskiego, lubuskiego i zachodniopomorskiego. The Wielkopolska province is clearly different from the remaining provinces of western Poland. In terms of nuptiality it rather resembles Poland, taken as a whole. The surprisingly low TNR figure for Opolskie province, accompanied by a relatively high volume of migration to Germany, can be interpreted as evidence for the fact that a certain percentage of demographic events takes place outside of Poland. It should be noted at this point that countries of Western Europe experienced a similarly low level of TNR 20 or 30 years earlier. The first to be affected by this trend were Scandinavian countries, followed by the rest of Western Europe.

Another trend that can be noticed in all European countries is a rise in the average age at first marriage. In Poland, at the beginning of 1960s, the average age at first marriage was 22.5 years, cf. J. Paradysz (1990, p. 204), whereas in 2009 it rose to 25.8 years.

TNR for single women in 2009 one can see a marked growth in TNR for all provinces of western Poland. Within a short period between 2005 and 2009 nuptiality in Poland increased quite significantly, on average by 19.2% (17.2% for single men, 21.1% for single women). In addition, the rise in TNR was among the highest (22.5 % in general, 20.4% for single men, 24.7% for single women). In the "rest of Poland" the rise was clearly lower (18 % in general, 16.2% for single men, 19.9% for single women)

The differences between the two macro-regions of western Poland are not big. What did change within the 5-year period are the nuptiality curves. It is rather the intensity of nuptiality than its distribution that is different. Over the 5 years for which statistical data are available, TNR for men and women before the age of 50 **increased by as much as 19.2 %**. It is a huge jump, most likely not predicted by authors of the 2008 GUS forecast. It should be noted that this rise was even higher than in Poland as a whole – 22.5% (TNR for single women rose by 24.7%, for single men by 20.4%).

The rise in non-marital birth rate is evidence of the growing popularity of alternative forms of living together, that is consensual (informal) unions, which are rather poorly accounted for in statistical reporting. There are many indications suggesting that Poland is going the same way as Germany, and both macro-regions of western Poland are at the forefront of these changes.

An analysis of female fertility for western Poland should be conducted for two reasons. Firstly, as the analysis of nuptiality indicates, western provinces can be pioneers of changes in terms of the formation, permanence and development of the family in any form. Secondly, it can be used as a chance to test the assumptions of the latest demographic forecast by region.

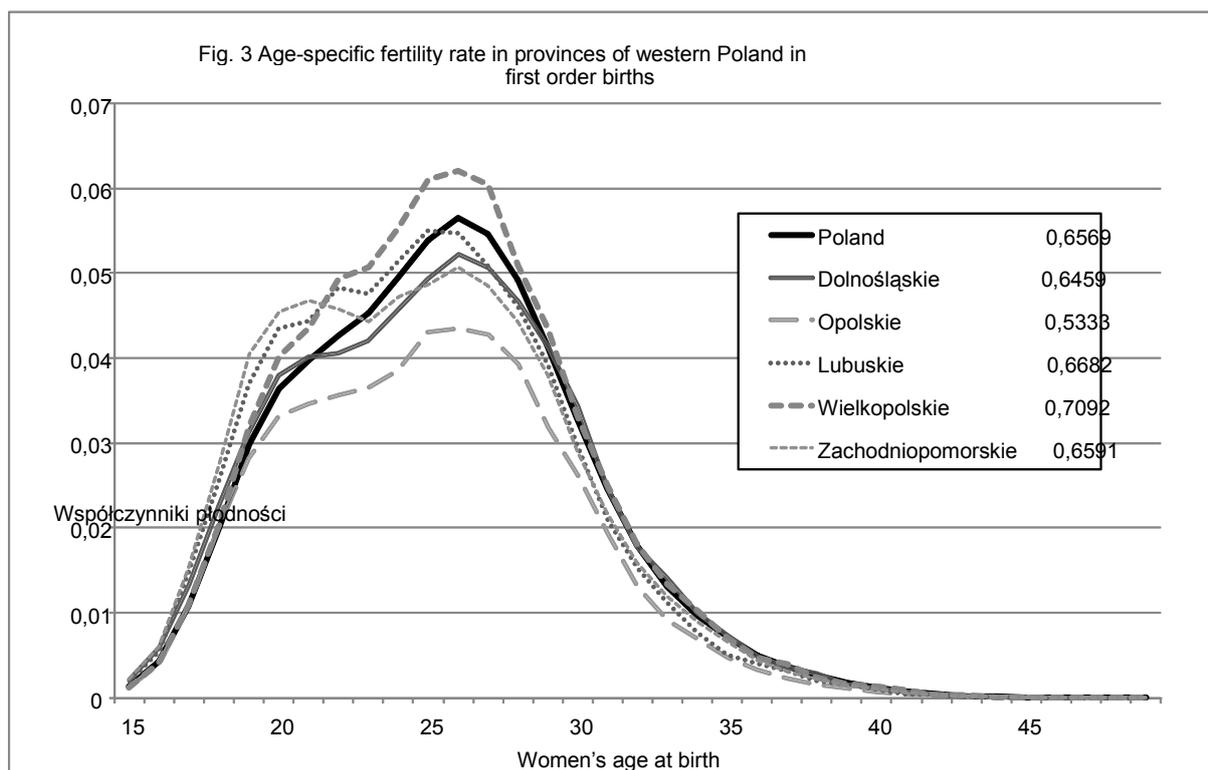
Modernist processes operating in western Poland are very well advanced. In terms of the percentage of non marital births, western Poland is much more similar to European countries than to the other macro-regions of

Poland. This is particularly evident with respect to the Zachodniopomorskiego province, where nonmarital live births in rural areas account for 42.8% and in the Lubuskie province (36.3%), with an upward trend. Another characteristic feature which distinguishes these two provinces from other regions of Poland is the higher share of nonmarital births in rural areas compared with urban areas.

Age specific fertility rates for provinces in western Poland in 2005-2009 even more so as was the case with respect to nuptiality, one is struck by the low fertility of the Opolskie province, at slightly over 1 child per woman. Given the low degree of urbanization, with 52.5% of urban population, no large cities, fertility of 1.081 for the period of 2005-2009 seems to be significantly underestimated. Like

in the case of nuptiality, it is fair to assume that population figures in the last decade, with their starting point provided by the 2002 census data, have been overestimated or many demographic events have taken place in other countries, most likely in Germany. Probably both of these factors have contributed to this situation.

Similar remarks can be made about the Lubuskie province, situated next to the German border, which is characterised by a higher than the national average level of urbanization. It is another evidence confirming the hypothesis that some demographic events, particularly marriages and births, are "exported" abroad and are not accounted for by Polish demographic statistics.



To adequately identify demographic prospects of a country or a region, it is necessary to analyse the female fertility structure, taking into account the number of children born. Fertility curves by order of births are a useful tool in this respect. Given the growing share of nonmarital births, it is the fertility curve for first-order births that increasingly indicates the start of a new family. Figure 3 is an example of an unusual, hitherto unknown curve shape, which are markedly different from the distribution of TFR of first order births. Given a large growth in nuptiality rate, it is evident that a significant change in marital behavior patterns has taken place in the last 5 years. One consequence of these changes is the "rebound" of age-specific fertility rates. It is most evident when looking at the bimodal curve for the Zachodniopomorskie province, where fertility rates started to fall at the age of 25. It should be noted that it is the 5-year average, so it cannot be accounted for by low incidence of events in the province. Such bimodality of fertility curves by successive order of births is rare, as in, for example, the case of a drastic change in abortion legislation in Romania in the 1960s.

**Conclusions**

a) In the period of 2005-2009 we could observe a reversal of unfavourable trends in nuptiality and childbearing age. Despite this trend, the assumptions

adopted by GUS in its 2008 forecast, where the highest scenario predicts TFR = 1.6, should be regarded as too pessimistic.

b) 3 provinces located along Poland's western border seem to be closest to what many demographers call the second demographic transition, as evidenced by a considerable fall in nuptiality in 1990, a rise in nonmarital births and average childbearing age.

c) The development strategy for the provinces of western Poland should take into account threats connected with population ageing. These dangers cannot be averted by any possible upward adjustment of the 2008 forecast.

d) Serious concerns are raised by an evident decline in the improvement rate of health conditions and increasingly lower gains in life expectancy in the first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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