

# Social assistance beneficiaries in 2020

29.10.2021

 **4.1%**

Share of social assistance beneficiaries in the total population

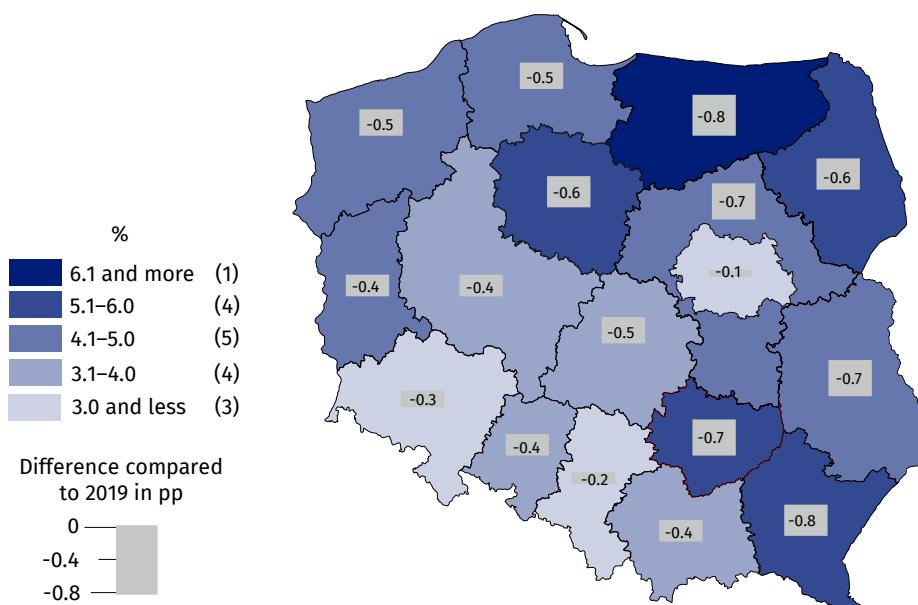
In 2020, the number of social assistance beneficiaries amounted to 1 589.3 thousand people and was by 186.4 thousand lower than in 2019. The range of benefiting from social assistance, i.e. the share of beneficiaries in the total population, decreased by 0.5 pp and amounted to 4.1%.

In 2020, the process of the decline in the number of people who benefited from social assistance benefits continued

The number of beneficiaries in households and of homeless people with per capita income below the income threshold<sup>1</sup> amounted to 912.1 thousand, which accounted for 2.4% of the total population, which is 0.2 pp less compared to 2019.

The downward trend in the share of rural population among social assistance beneficiaries continued. In 2020, for the first time – since the observation of this group was carried out – there were more urban residents among the total beneficiaries of social assistance. Their number amounted to 807.1 thousand, which constituted 50.8% of the total number of beneficiaries. In rural areas, the share of beneficiaries in the total number of inhabitants was still higher and amounted to 5.1%, while in urban areas it was 1.6 pp smaller. It is worth noting, however, that a constant phenomenon that has been observed for over 10 years is not only the decline in the share of rural residents among the beneficiaries of social assistance, but also a faster decline in the scope of benefiting from social assistance in rural areas than in urban areas. In comparison with the previous year, this indicator in rural areas decreased by 0.8 pp, and in urban areas by 0.3 pp.

**Map 1. Share of social assistance beneficiaries in the total population by regions in 2020**



Source: Central Collection of the National Social Assistance Monitoring System of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy.

The highest share of social assistance beneficiaries in the number of inhabitants – 7.2% was recorded in Warmińsko-Mazurskie region, and a relatively high share of beneficiaries in the number of inhabitants, above 5%, occurred also in Kujawsko-Pomorskie (6.0%), Świętokrzyskie (5.6%), Podlaskie (5.5%) and Podkarpackie (5.4%). The smallest range of social assistance

In the analysed year, for the first time since the beginning of the survey, urban residents constituted the majority of the beneficiaries of social welfare

<sup>1</sup> In 2020, the amount of this criterion for a person in a family was PLN 528, and for single-handedly managing persons it was PLN 701. These amounts were established in 2018. The study uses terms "poor households" to denote households with an income lower than the above-mentioned thresholds, and "poor beneficiaries" – to denote members of these households.

The largest share of beneficiaries in the population occurred in northern and eastern regions

beneficiaries was recorded in Warsaw capital region, where it amounted to 2.3%. Moreover, a low share of beneficiaries of social assistance in the number of inhabitants – at the level of 3% and lower – occurred in the following regions: Śląskie (2.8%) and Dolnośląskie (3.0%).

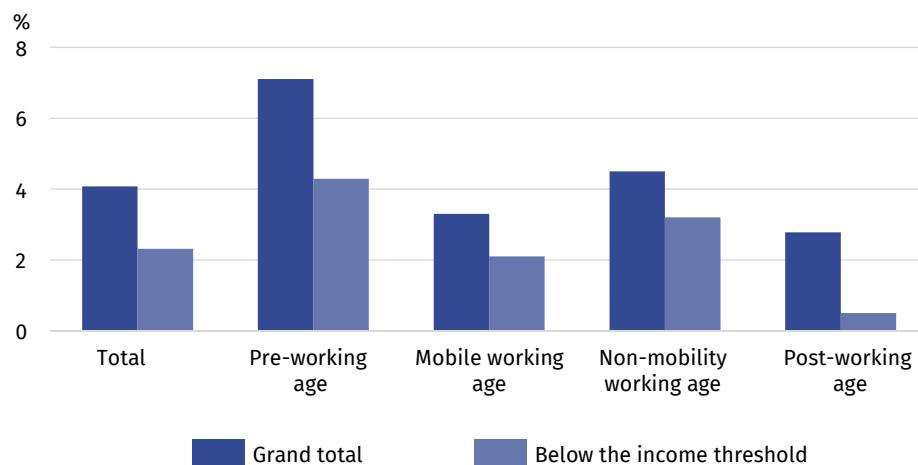
A decrease in the value of this indicator in 2020 compared to the previous year was recorded in all regions. The largest – by 0.8 pp occurred in the following regions: Warmińsko-Mazurskie and Podkarpackie. Moreover, a significant decrease – by 0.7 pp has also been reported in Lubelskie and Świętokrzyskie regions, as well as in Masovian regional region.

Among the beneficiaries of social assistance, 494.0 thousand people, i.e. 31.1%, are persons at pre-working age. The range of benefiting from social assistance in this age group was relatively high – it amounted to 7.1%, and the share of children and youth under 18 from poor households in the total number of children and youth in the same age group was 4.3%.

In turn, the percentage of persons at post-working age benefiting from social assistance in the total number of people at this age was 2.8%, and the percentage of poor beneficiaries at post-working age – 0.5%. It is worth adding that in the group of beneficiaries at retirement age, 81.9% are members of households with per capita income above the income threshold. These are persons who, due to their health condition and family situation (over 70% manage single-handedly), benefit from care services.

Above 7% of Polish residents under the age of 18 are members of families benefiting from social assistance

**Chart 1. Share of social assistance beneficiaries in the total population by economic age groups in 2020**

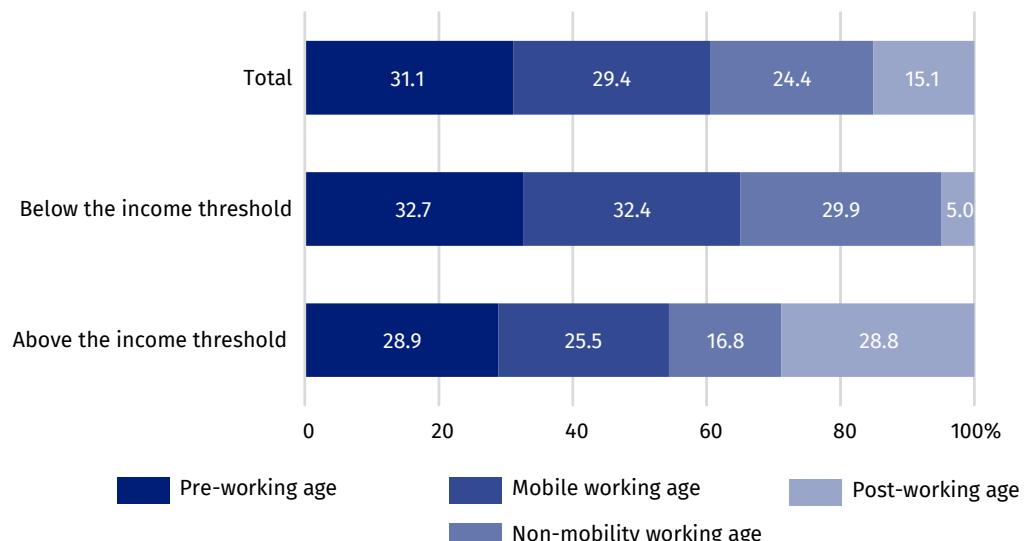


Source: Central Collection of the National Social Assistance Monitoring System of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy.

In the structure of the population of beneficiaries by economic age groups, persons at pre-working age (31.1%) and at mobile working age (29.4%) prevailed. The share of people at post-working age amounted to 15.1%. Among the poor beneficiaries, the percentage of people at post-working age amounted to 5%, while it was much higher (28.8%) in the group of beneficiaries with per capita income above the income threshold.

The group of people at retirement age has the smallest share in the group of social assistance beneficiaries

**Chart 2. Structure of social assistance beneficiaries by economic age groups in 2020**



Among 1 561.9 thousand social assistance beneficiaries in households<sup>2</sup>, 445.8 thousand (28.5%) are people constituting single-person households, and 1 116.1 thousand (71.5%) are members of multi-person households. A characteristic feature of the discussed group is the significant share of single-handedly managing persons amid beneficiaries living in urban areas. In 2020, it amounted to 37.0% and was almost twice as high as in the rural areas (20.0%).

The group of poor social assistance beneficiaries accounts for 56.9% of all beneficiaries – household members.

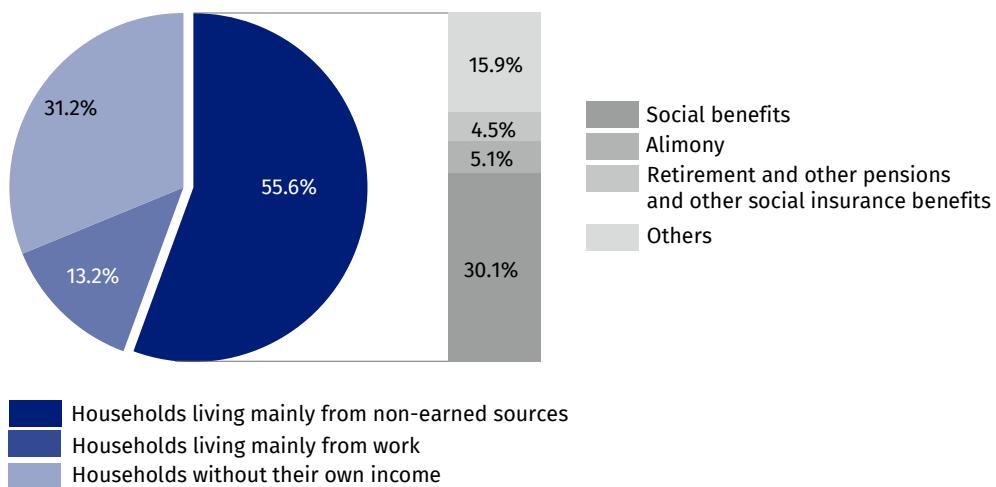
A low financial status of this group of people results mainly from their lower economic activity. In 2020, among 547.2 thousand people at working age from poor households, only 12.7% were employed, 44.8% were looking for a job, and 42.6% were economically inactive. Among the economically inactive, over 63% are learners, disabled or chronically ill.

Among 429.0 thousand poor households, every third – 31.2% did not have their own sources of income. However, more than half – 55.6% lived from unearned sources, most of them were social benefits. Social insurance and retirement and other pension benefits constituted the main source of income for 4.5% of households. Work was the main source of income for only 13.2% of poor households.

56.9% of the beneficiaries are members of poor households

Every third poor household did not have its own sources of income, while more than half lived from unearned sources

**Chart 3. Structure of poor households by main source of income in 2020**



<sup>2</sup> I.e. excluding 27.4 thousand homeless people to whom social welfare centres admitted benefits in 2020.

In 2020, the most common reasons for benefiting from social assistance by poor beneficiaries (apart from the low material status) were problems related to poor health or disability (they occurred in over 57% of households) and unemployment (54.9% of households). First of the above-mentioned problems dominated among single-person households, it occurred in over 69.5% of single-person households. Unemployment concerned mainly multi-person households – it was reported by 65.7% of this type of households as one of reasons for benefiting from social assistance. Family problems also played an important role, in particular, helplessness in care and education and managing a household, including those related to single parenthood as well as multi-children parenthood. Family problems occurred in over half (50.6%) of multi-person households.

The most common reasons for granting benefits to poor families are unemployment and problems related to illness or disability of a family member

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#### **Related information**

[Social assistance beneficiaries in 2018](#)

#### **Availability in databases**

[Database Local Data Bank – Health care – Social care and family benefits – Social assistance beneficiaries](#)

#### **Terms used in official statistics**

[Social assistance beneficiaries](#)

[Households of social assistance beneficiaries](#)

[Social assistance](#)