

Information on the size and directions of emigration for temporary stay from Poland between 2004-2020

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176

At the end of 2020, fewer permanent residents of Poland temporarily stayed abroad than in the previous year.

Statistics Poland presents annually an estimate of the number of Polish residents temporarily staying abroad (the stock of Polish immigrants in other countries). The first estimate, taking into account the years 2004-2006, was published in October 2007; the next - in the following years 2008-2020. The estimate presented below shows the number of emigrants from Poland temporarily staying abroad – as reported at the end of each year (in the period 2004-2005 and 2010-2020). Therefore, these data are not migration flows - the total number of departures (Poles leaving their homeland) in particular years, and as such cannot be summed up.

The data for the years 2010-2020 concern individuals staying temporarily abroad for more than 3 months, while the data for the years 2004-2005 include persons staying temporarily longer than 2 months. The differences in the results of these studies, resulting from the change in the criterion of the period of absence in Poland are non-significant. Thus, the data can be compared over time. These persons who stay outside the country for many years and have not deregistered from permanent residence in Poland after leaving are also considered as individuals temporarily staying abroad, according to the applied methodology. The estimates do not include seasonal emigration of Poles. This type of emigration, due to its duration - usually up to three months - in most EU countries is subjected to simplified formal and legal procedures or is not registered at all.

As in previous years, the table below includes estimated data according to the direction of emigration - the countries of the "EU-15" (except Luxembourg and Portugal) and the Czechia. From the non-EU countries, Norway (a country belonging to the European Economic Area - EEA) and Great Britain are presented. These two countries are important destinations for Polish emigrants.

It is estimated that the number of Poles temporarily staying in other countries decreased in 2020 compared to the previous year. Moreover the results indicate that this decline was greater than in 2019. The data suggest that this trend is mainly due to the decreasing number of Poles residing in Great Britain, while in other European countries the changes were minimal. The decline was also noted in non-European countries.

According to the estimation, at the end of 2020, around 2,239 thousands of permanent residents of Poland temporarily stayed outside the country, which is 176 thousands (7.3%) less than in 2019. There were approximately 1,973 thousands people in Europe (161 thousands less than in 2019), most of them - around 1,339 thousands - stayed in the EU member states. Among the EU countries, the higher number of Polish emigrants resided in Germany (706 thousands), Netherlands (135 thousands) and Ireland (114 thousands).

The 2020 was the third consecutive year in which a decrease in the number of Polish permanent residents residing in Great Britain was reported, this number decreased by approximately 164 thousands (24.2%). This means that more Polish people left this country than emigrated there. This decrease was much higher than in 2019, when it was estimated at 17,000 (2%).

A relatively small decrease in the number of temporary emigrants from Poland was reported, among others, in Italy and Sweden. A slight increase in the number of Poles was observed in Ireland and Germany (in both countries an increase of 2,000 compared to 2019). On the other hand, a greater increase was recorded for the Netherlands and Norway - 10 thousands (8%) and 9 thousands (10%) respectively. In the other European countries there were no or minor changes or they were minimal.

The most Poles stayed temporarily in: Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Ireland, Norway and Italy

The number of Polish emigrants temporarily staying in Great Britain decreased by approximately 164,000. (24.2%)

As in previous years, the main reason for emigration was to find work abroad. This is indicated by the results of Polish household surveys (BAEL, EU-SILC).

The main reason for going abroad is the willingness to find work there

Among the people whose travel abroad was reported in municipal population census units, the most populated group in 2020 was the one aged 30-39. It is worth pointing out is that, 10 years earlier, the most numerous group of emigrants were people aged 20-29. Therefore, it can be assumed that a significant number of people who left the country in the first years after Poland's accession to the EU have stayed abroad until now.

Table 1. Estimated emigration from Poland for temporary stay between 2004-2020^a (number of people staying abroad at the end of the year)

COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE	The number of emigrants in the thousands												
	2004	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
TOTAL	1 000	1 450	2 000	2 060	2 130	2 196	2 320	2 397	2 515	2 540	2 455	2415	2239
Europe	770	1 200	1 685	1 754	1 816	1 891	2 013	2 098	2 214	2 241	2 155	2134	1973
European Union (26 countries)^b	750	1 170	1 607	1 670	1 720	1 789	1 901	1 983	2 096	2 121	2 031	2008	1339
of which:													
Austria	15	25	29	25	28	31	34	36	39	40	41	41	42
Belgium	13	21	45	47	48	49	49	52	54	54	54	53	52
Czechia	.	.	7	7	8	8	9	9	9	9	10	10	10
Denmark	.	.	19	21	23	25	28	30	32	33	34	34	34
Finland	0,4	0,7	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
France	30	44	60	62	63	63	63	64	64	64	64	63	63
Greece	13	17	16	15	14	12	9	8	8	7	7	7	5
Spain	26	37	48	40	37	34	32	30	29	28	28	28	28
Netherlands	23	43	92	95	97	103	109	112	116	120	123	125	135
Ireland	15	76	133	120	118	115	113	111	112	112	113	112	114
Germany	385	430	440	470	500	560	614	655	687	703	706	704	706
Sweden	11	17	33	36	38	40	43	46	49	50	51	51	49
Great Britain	150	340	580	625	637	642	685	720	788	793	695	678	.
Italy	59	70	92	94	97	96	96	94	93	92	90	88	86
Countries outside the European Union	20	30	78	84	96	102	112	115	118	120	124	126	634
of which:													
Norway	.	.	50	56	65	71	79	84	85	85	86	88	97
Great Britain	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	514

^a The data refer to the number of people staying abroad temporarily: for the years 2004-2005 - over 2 months, for the years 2010-2020 - over 3 months.

^b For 2004-2005 - 24 countries, for 2010-2012 - 26 countries, for 2013-2019 - 27 countries. Poland is not included in the number of the EU countries.

It should be noted that the results of the estimate prepared by Statistics Poland reflect the trend and directions of Poles' departures and should not be treated as "hard" data, but rather as approximate values. The estimation is difficult due to several factors, namely: (i) the different systems of recording migration flows operating in particular countries and (ii) differences regarding availability of data on migration. The data of the host countries, presenting the number of Poles or people born in Poland, also include those who emigrated from Poland permanently and are not included in the above estimate. In addition, when elaborating migration statistics, particular countries often take into account different lengths of residence as a criterion for qualifying a person as an immigrant. Many of them use the clear-cut 1-year criterion and do not conduct or publish short-term migration statistics. The complexity of the analysis is also due to the fact that some Poles have dual citizenship. As a result, a person who has Polish citizenship and that of the receiving country is not treated in this country as a Polish citizen. Another difficulty in estimating the data for particular countries is the relatively frequent phenomenon of "continuous migrations", by which we mean that people, once leaving Poland, continuously change their country of residence. For example, initially emigrating to Great Britain, then moving to Norway and then towards Denmark or another country - more attractive in terms of the ease of job opportunities,

offered salaries or an access to a 'more generous' social benefits system. It happens that the data of the other countries regarding the change in the size of the resource of the foreigners are not consistent with the data on migration flows and natural movement (on births and deaths rates) in a given year. This is often due to the fact that data on the migration stocks are determined on the basis of information from systems other than the data on the migration flows or take into account various types of adjustments. The phenomenon of emigration is difficult to fully capture in statistics, the data of other countries may not include all emigration from a given country (including returns to Poland). People who leave a given country often do not report this fact in that country and, as a consequence, are not included in its emigration statistics.

As it is extremely difficult to obtain the data on the actual scale of migration from a specific survey or register, a rational solution is to combine the available sources, both domestic and foreign, and procure appropriate estimates on this basis. This approach is currently used in Polish migration statistics: it takes into account the entire complexity of the migration phenomenon which results e.g. from the various registration systems of migrants.

Until 2008, the estimates were based on the results of the 2002 census (in May 2002, 786,000 Polish residents lived abroad, of which over 626,000 for a period of at least 12 months). These data were updated with the use of domestic and foreign sources of statistical and administrative data. These estimates were presented in the information on the size and directions of emigration from Poland published in the previous years¹. The basis for the estimates for the years 2011-2020 and the correction of the data for the 2009 and the 2010 were the last census conducted in the 2011 and foreign data sources. The results of statistical surveys, based on administrative sources (including persons who reported temporary departure abroad in the commune's records) and sample surveys conducted within households are also taken into account.

Last year's information on the size and directions of emigration for temporary stay from Poland was accompanied by estimates of the number of people temporarily staying abroad in 2014-2018 by gender and age groups of emigrants, the nature of their place of residence before departure (city/village) and voivodships. An up-to-date assessment is also attached to this release.

When quoting data from Statistics Poland, please include the following information: "Source of data: Statistics Poland", and when publishing calculations based on the data published by Statistics Poland, please include the following information: "Own study based on Statistics Poland data".

¹ <http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/migracje-zagraniczne-ludnosci/informacja-o-rozmiarach-i-kierunkach-emigracji-z-polski-w-latach-2004-2019,2,10.html> (archives)

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