

Demographic data

The most recent data collected in the National Census of Population and Housing (Narodowy Spis Powszechny) conducted in 2011 indicate that there are 4.7 million disabled people in Poland (4,697,500). It means that disabled people constitute 12.2% of population in Poland, in relation to 14.3% in 2002 (according to the census conducted in 2002). Almost 46.1% of all disabled people are men in relation to 53.9% of women but these figures might differ due to the underestimation of collected data.

According to the preliminary results of Population and Housing Census there were more than 3.1 million persons (3,133,200) with a disability certificate. There were 2,654,100 persons who were biologically disabled with a disability certificate, of whom 479,000 were only legally disabled, 1,564,300 were only biologically disabled, and 4,218,100 were biologically disabled.

In comparison with the 2002 census, the total number of disabled people has decreased by 759,000, i.e. by 13.9%, with the number of legally disabled people decreasing by 1,316,900, i.e. by 29.6%, whereas the number of only biologically disabled people has risen to 557,700, i.e. by 55.4%.

National Population and Housing Census in 2011 was conducted differently than the previous ones since in 2011 the administration databases were used. In addition, data related to the disability were collected through the representative census and that means that not all citizens were asked about their disability. Data collected afterwards were generalized to the entire population.

According to the Central Statistical Office (GUS), preliminary data collected in 2011 census in relation to the number of disabled men and women both in urban and rural areas should be considered underestimated.

Since the questions on disability were non-obligatory, almost 1.5 million people refused to answer it. The efforts aiming at reducing the number of missing answers (ca. 1,940,200) are being taken.

However, there is a clear change in the structure of disabled people, both men and women, and according to the type and degree of disability.

The decrease of legally disabled people aged 16 and more and the change in the structure of people with disability according to the type and degree of disability are confirmed by the Labour Force Survey in Poland.

According to the results of Labour Force Survey in Poland carried quarterly by the Central Statistical Office (GUS) since 1992, the total number of disabled people aged 16 and more has been gradually decreasing since 2002, with 3.5 million (3,506,000) in 2009 and approximately 3.4 million (3,384,000) in 2011. According to the Labour Force Survey in Poland recounted on the basis of new population balances after National Population and Housing Census in 2011, the total number of disabled people aged 16 in 2014 was 3,272,000 and it indicates that 10.6% of population aged 15 and more had a disability certificate. The number of disabled people in working age in 2014 was 1,901,000 which accounted for 7.6% of population of that age.

The change in the structure of disabled people according to the type and degree of disability might be also noticed in comparison with data related to the share of persons with different type and degree of disability in the entire population in years 2002-2014. And so, according to Labour Force Survey in Poland in 2002 in the whole population of disabled people there were 21.1% of people with severe disability, 35.1% with moderate disability and 42.7% with minor disability. In 2014 the numbers were 28.4%, 42.33% and 29.3% respectively. Among the people of working age with a disability certificate in 2014 the structure was as follows: 22.0% with severe disability, 45.0% with moderate disability, 33.0% with minor disability.

According to the European Health Interview Survey in the end of 2009 there were almost 4.2 million people with a disability certificate (or equivalent), with 184,000 children under 16 years with a disability certificate among them. It is about 600,000 more in comparison with data collected in Labour Force Survey in Poland at the same time. However, it should be noted that the purposes of both surveys were different and since in both cases the answers to questions about legal disability were subjective and based on the statements of the respondents, the outcomes of both surveys cannot be compared.

As a result, in the end of 2009 the structure of people with legally confirmed disability according to the European Health Interview Survey was as follows: more than every third disabled person had a legally confirmed moderate disability, while the remaining two groups of people with legally confirmed severe or minor disability constituted further 30% each. In

addition, children under 16 years accounted for 4.4% of people with legally confirmed disability.

The most frequent cause of disability are diseases of the circulatory system, musculoskeletal system and neurological diseases. The comparatively lower share of disabilities related to impaired hearing and eyesight, mental illness and mental retardation in the population of people with disabilities hinders, however, life of thousands of people with impaired mobility, thus requiring a special approach in education, labour market and in everyday life.