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Political views in the years 1990-2015. Opinions of the youth against the background of the society as a whole

CBOS measures political views on a 7-point scale, where 1 signifies left-wing views and 7 means the right wing. Respondents are asked to select the point which best reflects their political orientation. People selecting points 1 to 3 are considered left-wing and respondents choosing points 5 to 7 are considered right-wing.

After systemic change, the proportion of citizens self-identifying as left-wing fell from 28% in 1990 to 15% in 1991. Until 1993 declarations of right-wing identity prevailed, but their magnitude systematically fell. A year later, the left-wing group (27%) was 8 percentage points bigger than the right. However, the good times for the left lasted a year only.

In 1995-1998 right-wing declarations dominated. The increase in social support for the left wing started in 1999 and resulted in the electoral victory of the coalition of Alliance of the Democratic Left and Union of Labour (SLD-UP) in 2001. However, as early as a year after SLD formed the government the support for the left started to decline. In 2008 it reached its lowest level in the last 25 years

(13%) and subsequently hovered between 14% and 17%. In 2008 33% of respondents declared having right-wing views. At present this proportion is only slightly smaller (31%).

Analyses show that rightwing self-identification



tends to be more radical than left-wing. This is a long-term regularity. Since 1990, the proportion of extreme right-wing declarations (point 7) was generally larger than the proportion of extreme left-wing views (point 1). The exceptions to this

Declared political views of Poles in the years 1990-2015* rule were the years 1993 Yearly proportion of extreme views in right-wing and left-wing declarations and 1999-2002, when



*In 2015 data for the months Jan-Sep

rule were the years 1993 and 1999-2002, when there were more extreme left-wing declarations, or the proportions were comparable. Since 2002 the views of right-wing respondents have become more decisive.

In the last two years there has been radicalisation of right-wing views. In the first three quarters of 2015, people who self-identified as extreme right constituted 12% of all respondents (37% of right wingers). Such a result was recorded for the first time in CBOS surveys.

Trends among respondents aged 18-24 years are similar to those recorded in the whole society. Young people relatively often declare centrist orientation or answer "don't know." This means that for most of the time they held both left-wing and right-wing views less often than all Poles.

In 2014 the frequency of right-wing declarations among the young people started to rise rapidly, which was accompanied by a strong decrease in left-wing views. In 2015 the proportion of right wingers among them was higher than in general population. In the first three quarters of 2015 a third (33%) of people aged 18-24 years described their political views as right-wing.

Declared political views of Poles aged 18-24 in the years 1990-2015*

Yearly proportion of young respondents self-identifying as left-wing and right-wing compared with all respondents



Nevertheless, political views of people aged 18-24 years are less clearly defined than opinions of the whole society. It is indicated by data on radical attitudes. The proportion of extreme answers in left and right-wing responses among the youth is much lower than among all Poles. This means that young people are less radical in their political opinions. The only time when this was not true was in 1990. Back then, 25% of right-wing respondents aged 18-24 expressed extreme views.

Declared political views of Poles aged 18-24 in the years 1990-2015*

Yearly proportion of extreme declarations in all left-wing and right-wing declarations. Youth compared with all respondents



More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: "Interest in Politics and Political Views in Years 1989–2015. Young People Compared to Others", October 2015. Fieldwork conducted monthly from 1989 until September 2015.

Psychological characteristics of party electorates

Parliamentary elections held in Poland in October were a catalyst for a change on the political scene. On the political supply side, new programs and personalities emerged. Their origin owes to exhaustion with the government of the coalition of Civic Platform and Polish Peasant Party (PO-PSL), which led to a surprisingly good result of Paweł Kukiz in the first round of the May presidential elections. Two recently formed groupings managed to have their candidates elected to the Sejm: Modern party (Nowoczesna - Ryszard Petru) and the movement Kukiz'15. Moreover, three more parties are in parliament: Law and Justice (PiS), PO and PSL. Who are the people voting for groupings represented in the new parliament, what differentiates them, what psychological attributes and attitudes characterise them?

The analysis centres on the following psychological phenomena: optimism-pessimism, reflected in evaluations and attitudes related to the situation in the country and personal matters; openness to change: conservatism - innovativeness, reflected in the attitude to changes around the world and willingness to introduce them; willingness to cooperate, which consists in belief in the possibility of non-antagonistic interpersonal relations and is based on trust in other people; paranoid political thinking, which is reflected in conviction that there are hidden forces ruling the world and in belief in the so-called conspiracy theory of history; authoritarianism, which is a conviction that interpersonal relations are hierarchically structured, in a belief in effectiveness of force and necessity to subordinate to authority; anomie, understood as the experience of a loss of sense, being lost in the social world, and in uncertainty about its values and rules; political alienation, which is a feeling of exclusion from the political domain, lack of influence and distrust in mechanisms of power and political elites. The strength of these psychological attitudes was studied with scales constructed on the basis of questionnaire items. The use of scales allows for showing the results as composite indicators.

Voters of PiS are characterised by high levels of political paranoia: they are particularly prone to thinking about politics in terms of a conspiracy of hidden forces. Moreover, they are marked by strong authoritarianism. The PiS electorate is resilient to change. It also lags behind most other groups of voters in readiness to cooperate with other people. It is pessimistic to a less than average extent. Levels of anomie and political alienation are in this electorate similar to the average. Supporters of PO, the party in government until recently, are characterised by relatively low level of political alienation. They are optimistic to a level above average. Among different electorates they are marked by relatively low tendency to perceive politics as a conspiracy of unknown forces. Anomie and distance to politics (alienation) appear to a low degree. They are more trusting than average and display stronger readiness to cooperate. Their level of openness to change is similar to the average.

The strongest characteristic of the electorate of Kukiz'15 is high openness to change. It is accompanied by aboveaverage willingness to cooperate with others. Supporters of this electoral committee are marked by significantly higher pessimism than other groups. Innovativeness and readiness to cooperate combined with strong pessimism signify strong potential for rebellion in this group of voters. They are also distinguished by a tendency to think about politics in categories of conspiracy of backstage forces. Sympathisers of Kukiz'15 have relatively high level of anomie and political alienation, but low level of authoritarianism.

For supporters of Nowoczesna (Ryszard Petru), most indicators reach levels signalling highest satisfaction among electorates. Sympathisers of this party show highest level of optimism and willingness to cooperate. They have lowest tendency to think about politics as backstage power play. Authoritarianism and anomie are weakest among them. As regards political subjectivity they are second to PO voters, but also display low levels of political alienation. They are moderately open to changes.

PSL supporters are marked by below-average pessimism. Moreover, they are differentiated by strong innovativeness, openness to change. Their willingness to cooperate is similar to the national average, but lower than in other electorates. They are characterized by exceptionally high authoritarianism. The other indicators have values similar to those recorded among the society as a whole.

Levels of well-being and attitudes of electorates are related to their socio-demographic profiles. The good psychological state of the supporters of Nowoczesna (Ryszard Petru) is explained by the fact that they are best educated, live in good material conditions and have relatively high position in the social hierarchy. On the other end there is the PiS electorate, which contains a relatively high number of people with low socio-economic status and many seniors. These groups are, in general, in worse conditions. Voters of Kukiz'15 are, in their majority, young and open to change.

Indicators

optimism-pessimism on a scale from 0 (highest optimism) to 2 (highest pessimism)



openness to change on a scale from 1 (conservatism) to 10 (innovativeness)



willingness to cooperate on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high)



paranoid political thinking on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high)





authoritarianism on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high)







political alienation on a scale from 1 (civic subjectivity) to 5 (political alienation)

More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: "Psychological Profiles of Party Electorates", October 2015. Fieldwork for national sample: August (N=1040) and September 2015 (N=972). The random address sample is representative for adult population of Poland.

Professional position of Poles

According to declarations, over half of Poles (54%) are in employment, out of which 47% work full time, while 4% work part time and 3% are in on-and-off employment. As regards the legal basis of work, almost half of those in employment work on unlimited-term contracts, while close to a fifth have a fixed-term contract and more than a tenth are self-employed. Smaller groups work as private farmers or on the basis of civil contract not covered by employment code. A small group of people, usually working on an on-and-off basis, are employed without any formal contract.



What is the source of your income?

Unlimited-term employment contract is most common in case of employees with higher education, managers, professionals and administrative staff. Other common characteristics of this group are: living in big (but not the biggest) cities and being between 35 and 54 years of age. Women tend to be so employed slightly more often than men. Fixed-term employment is more typical for respondents aged 18-34, living in towns between 20 and 100 thousand people; as regards professional position, for service sector employees and workers. Civil contracts are most common in case of young people (aged 18-24 years) and oldest employees (e.g. pensioners earning extra income). This type of legal basis is relatively popular among residents of biggest cities, people with primary education, employees in service sector and unskilled workers. This profile is similar to workers without contract: they tend to be young, uneducated and unskilled, in manual labour.

Most working respondents (81%) are satisfied with their employment, while less than a fifth (18%) are not. Satisfaction is most common among employees with unlimited-term contracts and the self-employed, while it is least frequent among people working on the basis of civil law or without any legal basis.

Are you satisfied with your form of employment?



Professional situation has some influence on political party preferences. The self-employed relatively often support Nowoczesna (Ryszard Petru), while private farmers tend to choose PiS and PSL. Employees on unlimited-term contracts and on civil contracts relatively often declare voting PO. Kukiz'15 is relatively popular among employees on fixed-term contracts and those working without any legal basis.

More information about this topic can be found in CBOS reports in Polish: "Forms of Employment in Poland" and "Forms of Employment and Socio-political Views", October 2015. Fieldwork for national sample: July (N=1044), August (N=1040) and September 2015 (N=972). The random address samples are representative for adult population of Poland.

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