

POLES' SEX LIVES

IN THIS ISSUE:

- POLES' SEX LIVES
- ISSUES IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN
- ATTITUDES TO ORGAN TRANSPLANTATION
- THE MEANING OF LIFE

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Public opinion polls allow us to gain a vast amount of information on society. On the basis of their findings we are able to say a lot about the conditions in which Poles live, their views on matters important for the country and for them personally, their aspirations, fears and expectations. We decided to supplement this knowledge with certain information concerning that intimate sphere of life - sex.

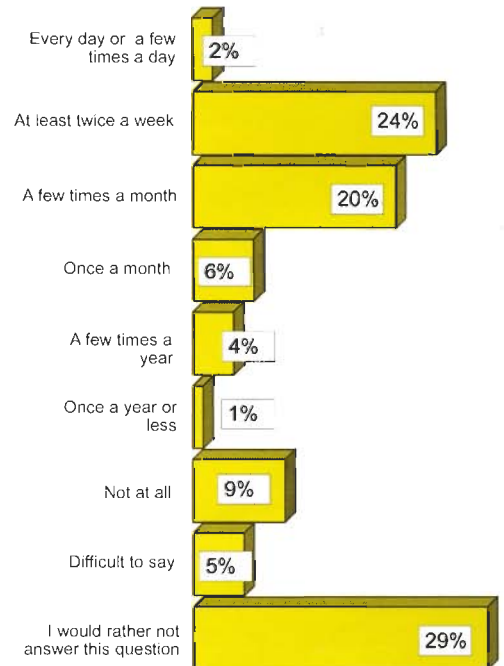
What role does sex play in Poles' lives? Are they satisfied or disappointed with their sex lives? How do they judge their sexual experiences?

Almost half of the respondents admitted that sex is an important part of life to them personally. Men expressed such an opinion more often (53%) than women (43%). Sexual intercourse is most often defined as a pleasure (38%) or an expression of love to one's partner (36%). Significantly fewer people perceive this sphere of life through the prism of satisfying their needs (13%) or of marital duty (9%). Pleasure and duty mutually exclude each other - a negligible number of respondents defined their sexual intercourse in these two categories simultaneously. It is worth stressing that women twice as often associate sex with matrimonial obligation (10%) than men (5%).

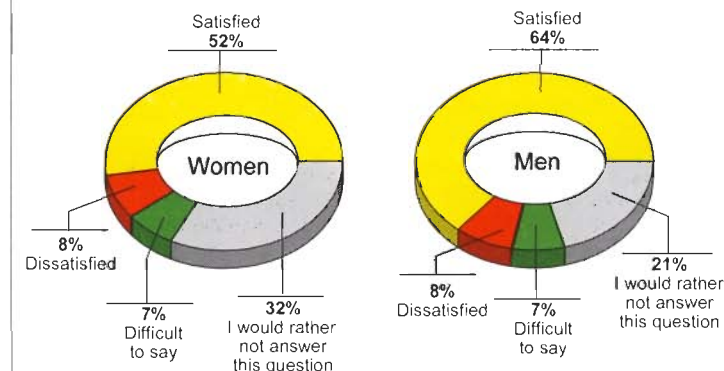
According to their own declarations, the largest part of the respondents has sexual relations on average twice a week or several times a month.

Men lead a more active sex life than women. The period of sexual activity is also longer in the case of men than women. Men in the 55-64 age group declare that they have sex at least a few times a month more than twice as often as women (46% and 22% respectively). On the other hand women declare sexual abstinence much more often than men. In the youngest age group (up to 24) twice as many women as men do not have any sexual contacts (18% and 9% respectively). However among respondents in the 55-64 age group as many as one in five women - according to their own declarations - do not lead a sex life while for men the figure is only one in a hundred.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU HAVE SEXUAL RELATIONS?



ARE YOU BASICALLY SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED WITH YOUR SEX LIFE?

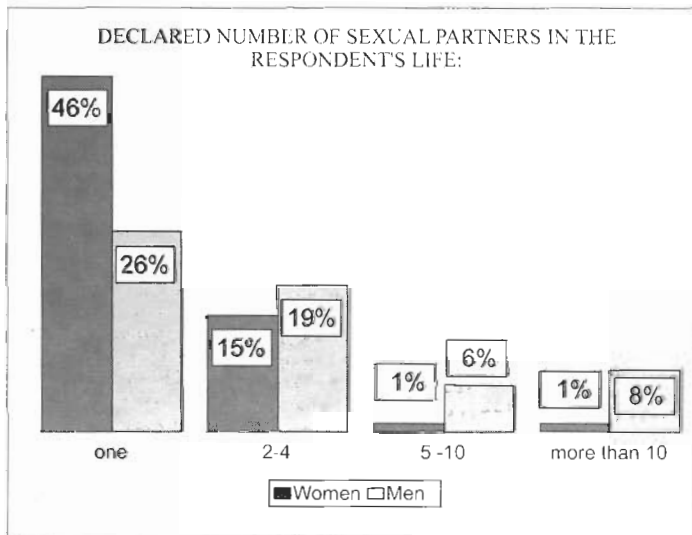


In all the categories based on how often people have sex, those who are satisfied with the frequency of their sexual relations predominate. The most respondents say that they have sex only when both partners want it. Men claim this somewhat more often than women. "Partnership sex" takes place above all where there is frequent sexual contact - the statement: "we have sex only when we both want it" is by far the most often expressed by people declaring they have sex at least a few times a month.

Women are decidedly more monogamous than men in their sex lives - almost every other woman respondent declares that she has had only one partner in her life, whereas among men one in four was satisfied with one partner. Married women (currently or in the past) significantly more often speak of having only one partner than married men. This fact also indicates that women more often marry their first sexual partner as well as that women less often betray their husbands than husbands their wives.

The majority of respondents say they are satisfied with their sex lives, however men claim this much more often than women. Frequency of sexual contact is very important for sexual satisfaction - the more often sex takes place the more satisfaction results from it - as basing it on the principles of partnership.

Those who are satisfied with their sex lives see sex as a pleasure or an expression of love towards the partner more than those who are dissatisfied with it. Disappointed people on the other hand more often associate this sphere of life with duty or perceive it in the category of satisfying their needs.



Source: CBOS bulletin "Poles' sex lives", April '97

ISSUES IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Just less than six months are left until the parliamentary elections - the election campaign will start shortly. Some people are saying that certain questions should be excluded from the pre-election discussion. We asked respondents which subjects ought in their view to be issues in the election campaign and those which politicians should not come into conflict over - also which matters they thought would in reality be the main themes of the campaign.

The answers to the question of what ought to be an issue in the election campaign can be read on the one hand as information concerning which issues the respondents would like to find out what the positions of specific parties are, and on the other, they show which questions Poles consider to be especially important and requiring solutions.

The reform of the health service and the system of pensions as well as methods of fighting crime and revitalising housing construction were in the first places on the list of desired subjects for the election campaign, indicated by at least one third of respondents. Certain issues are the object of interest of people who are directly affected by them. State farming policy is indicated by almost three quarters of farmers, revitalising housing construction is more often indicated by town than country dwellers. People of a pre-retirement age as well as old age and disability pensioners were most interested in the reform of the pensions system as an issue for the election campaign. Private business people most often mention the rate of taxation. People of a higher socio-professional status more often than other groups think that the subject of the campaign ought to be the reform of the healthcare and pensions systems and privatisation, on the other hand the young indicate integration of Poland into the European Union and NATO entry.

Among the questions which - according to the respondents - ought to be excluded from argument during the election campaign, decidedly the most often indicated was whether or not to ban abortions (57%). Other matters which politicians should not row about were mentioned much more rarely (20-28%) but it is worth emphasising that predominant among them were political topics - vetting, integration with NATO and the European Union, the constitution.

There is quite a big disparity between what - according to the respondents - ought to be the subject of discussion during the election campaign and what they actually expect to happen. They expect that much will be said about just those questions, which - in their view - should not be discussed - abortion, the constitution or vetting. On the other hand not many of those polled expect subjects to be mentioned which they see as being important questions for discussion like the fight against crime or housing construction. Therefore the respondents expect that the campaign for the next elections to parliament will again concentrate on questions of an ideological character while the most important problems for the public concerning everyday life will be treated as marginal.

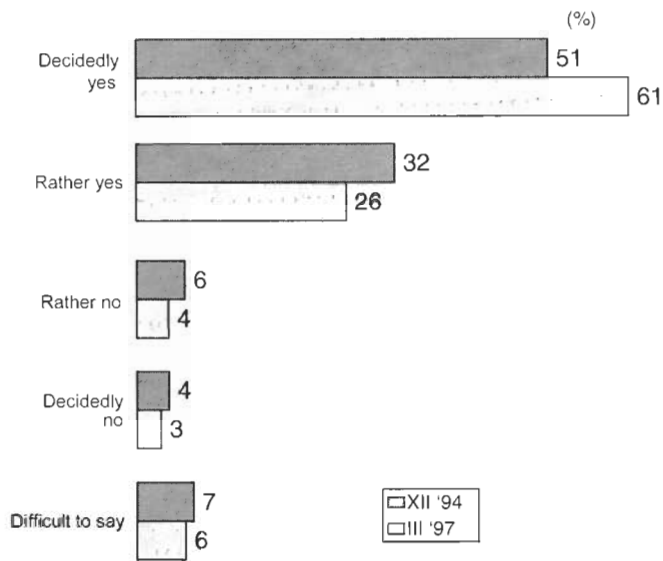
Source: CBOS bulletin "Issues in the election campaign", April 1997.

ATTITUDES TO ORGAN TRANSPLANTATION

A year ago in March a law was passed on the collection and transplantation of cells, tissues and organs regulating in a detailed and thorough way the question of organ transplantation in Poland.

Organ transplantation is accepted in Poland to the same degree as in western countries, where transplants are performed on a larger scale than here. Recent years have brought an increase of a few percentage points in Poles approving of these methods of medical treatment. In addition, it is important to note that the percentage of Poles having a clear, positive standpoint on this question has increased significantly.

DO YOU THINK IT PROPER TO TRANSPLANT ORGANS TAKEN FROM THE DECEASED IN ORDER TO SAVE THE LIFE OF, OR BRING BACK TO HEALTH, OTHER PEOPLE?



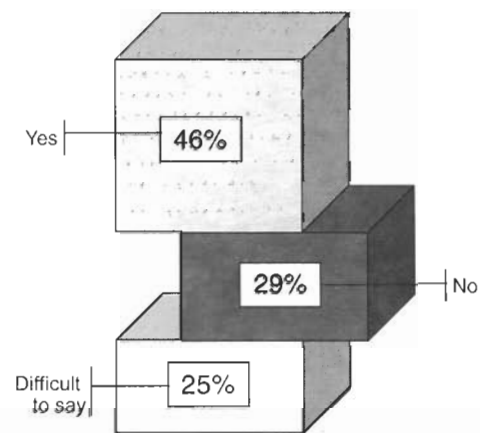
One of the factors limiting the number of transplant operations is the failure to obtain the agreement of members of the family of the deceased person in order to remove the organs. According to the replies of respondents, the acceptance of removing the organs of somebody close occurs most frequently when it is known that the deceased person had not been opposed to this (83%). Three fifths of those polled declare that they would not oppose extracting organs in a situation of a lack of knowledge of the will of the deceased, on the other hand 15% declare that on this question they would not respect the will of a deceased person who during his or her life had opposed giving up their organs. Knowledge concerning what family members think on the subject of transplantation - especially the certainty that they would not be opposed to donating their organs after death - has therefore an important significance for the attitudes of families after the death of their nearest, making it easier to accept the taking of organs for transplantation.

Over two fifths of the respondents declare that they know the opinion of their nearest on this question, which may be evidence of an increase of interest on this matter. A knowledge of the opinions of family members on organ transplantation is declared most often by people of a higher socio-professional status.

According to the law currently in force in Poland the use of organs for transplantation can take place only in specialist medical centres. They are distributed according to medical criteria and any kind of commercialisation of transplants is punishable by law.

The answers of the respondents indicate quite a significant suspiciousness and uncertainty concerning whether organs removed in transplantation centres end up with those who really need them most. However despite this the trust in the transplantation centres is higher than the mistrust.

DO YOU HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE MEDICAL CENTRES WHICH DEAL WITH TRANSPLANTS, THAT THE ORGANS REMOVED ARE TRANSPLANTED TO THOSE WHO REALLY NEED THEM WITHOUT ANY MATERIAL BENEFITS BEING GAINED?



Source: CBOS bulletin "Attitudes to organ transplantation", April '97.

THE MEANING OF LIFE

The problem of the meaning of life is, according to the respondents, quite often the subject of their reflections. Almost half those polled think about this subject at least very often, one third consider it only sometimes, and one in five either sporadically ponder on the meaning of their lives or do not bother with the question at all.

Spontaneous answers by the respondents to open questions concerning this matter show that for over one half of Poles the most important thing defining their feeling that life has meaning is the family (56%). Most often stress is laid on a good atmosphere in the family, full of love and mutual understanding. Almost one in three Poles see the meaning of their lives in their children or grandchildren - in their upbringing and ensuring a good future, education and decent living conditions for them.

For almost the same percentage of people the most important thing in life is health, and one in five Poles find a meaning for life in their work.

Close to one in eight respondents admit that most important for them are material values. Somewhat fewer people named moral values among the values deciding whether life is successful and meaningful - i.e. honesty, goodness, acting in accordance with one's conscience.

Among the values concerning the sphere of the sacred (7%) the act of faith in God itself was stressed as was the aspiration for salvation and avoiding sin.

Not many people (2%) were unable to say what in their case decided on the meaning of life, even fewer said that they thought life had no sense.

In as much as the answers concerning the meaning of life indicate what is most important in life for Poles, their desires or dreams speak not only about what

is important but also which of these most important desires are not satisfied. The structure of "collective" dreams understood in this way most often simply reflects the lack of those things which we as a society feel most strongly about.

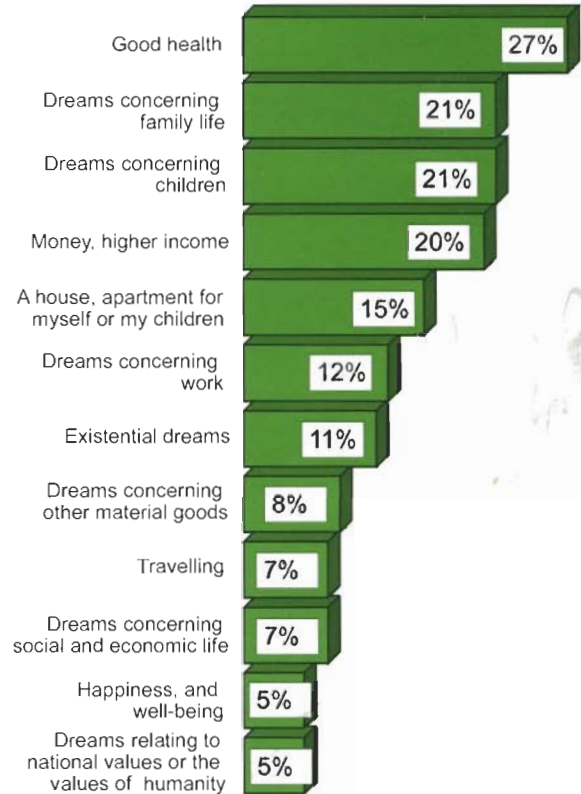
Over one in four of the respondents dream above all about good health. However the dreams of one fifth of those polled concern both family life and their children. Among the desires connected with the family the most frequent is the dream that it be a happy family, understanding, compatible. Poles also dream of a good future for their children.

Many of the desires Poles have concern the material side of life. In all over two fifths of the respondents spoke about money, an improvement in material conditions, better pay etc. The differences in the scale of desires in this area was very significant - from dreams about great wealth to the respondents limiting themselves to an increase in their disability or old age pension. The dream of a home, apartment for oneself or one's children occupies a high place in Poles' structure of desires. In this case the scale of aspirations was also very variegated - from a house with a garden and swimming pool to a desire to achieve the financial means necessary to decorate the apartment. One in eight respondents associate their desires with work - they most often dream of achieving a promotion, less often about work providing greater satisfaction or a career. The dreams of a smaller number of people concern the existential sphere - here the most often mentioned were a decent life, the desire to leave something behind and also to slow down the tempo of life.

The most popular determinants of the meaning of life are therefore the simplest matters while at the same time - and this is confirmed by other research - the most important areas for Poles are: the family, children, health. Compared to their life values the structure of dreams of the respondents reveals the deprivation of many of the basic needs of life among a significant part of society.

The differentiation in this area is however very big - insofar as some dream of travelling to exotic countries or a better car, the main worry of others is just a peaceful old age.

WHAT DO YOU DREAM ABOUT? IS THERE SOMETHING YOU SPECIFICALLY DESIRE?



In the diagram answers which amounted to at least 5% of the poll sample are taken into account. The percentages do not add up to 100 because respondents were allowed three replies.

Source: CBOS bulletin "The meaning of life", April '97.

In addition to the bulletins referred to above, the following have been published recently:

- The problem of abortion in state hospitals
- The 1997 parliamentary elections - preferences in March
 - The constitutional referendum
 - Poles' opinions of Easter
 - Public moods in March
- Attitudes to the government in March
 - The ranking of politicians
 - The images of political groupings
 - Poles' sex lives
- The perception of the social structure
 - Election campaign themes
 - Portraits of the opposition leaders
 - The social support for political parties
- The 1997 parliamentary elections - preferences in April
 - Public knowledge about laws concerning organ transplantation
 - Poles' attitudes to threats to the natural environment
 - The concordat - an issue which is still open
- Portrait of the anxious Pole - views on the meaning of life, life-values and dreams

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