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OCTOBER 2020 PROTESTS IN POLAND. A CASE STUDY OF OLKUSZ

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Abstract. *Introduction.* In October 2020 the most extensive social protests took place in Poland since the democratic transformation in 1989. They were caused pertinently by the Polish Constitutional Tribunal’s decision and government policy on abortion. Numerous protests were held all over the country, both in larger cities, smaller towns and villages. *Methods and materials.* The study presents the results of the internet surveying method (CAWI) and snowball sampling. These were the only methods which can be used to study protest participants themselves (busy straightening in the streets), but also useful because of the pandemic situation in Poland. A 30 question survey was filled by about 200 people who took part in the protest in Olkusz city. *Analysis.* Research was made in time of “first main wave of protests” period, i.e. October 24–26, 2020. The author underlines the role of youth in the protests, and wants to answer two main research questions, first of all: what was the role of ‘Generation Z’ in October protests, and as well: what are the political views of the protesters. Researches about the first “hours” of protest are mostly extremely rare, the article also allows to see not only new youth Gen Z, but also modern civil protests. *Results.* Results show that the participants comprising mostly youth were not conservative, and could easily be considered a new generation of Poles – quite different from their older colleagues. But how and why are youngsters so politically different?

Key words: “Women’s hell” protests, protest, youth, Poland, Generation Z.

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ОКТАБРЬСКИЕ ПРОТЕСТЫ В ПОЛЬШЕ В 2020 ГОДУ. ПРИМЕР ИЗ ПРАКТИКИ г. ОЛЬКУШ

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Аннотация. *Введение.* В октябре 2020 г. в Польше произошли самые масштабные социальные протесты со времен демократической трансформации в 1989 году. Прежде всего они были вызваны решением Конституционного трибунала Польши и политикой правительственной партии о запрете аборт. По всей стране прошли многочисленные акции протеста, как в крупных, так и небольших городах и деревнях. *Мето-*

ды и материалы. В исследовании представлены результаты применения метода интернет-опроса (CAWI), осуществленного с помощью «снежного кома». Это сочетание позволило опросить участников уличного протеста в условиях распространения пандемии в Польше. Анкету из 30 вопросов заполнили около 200 человек, принявших участие в акции протеста в городе Олькуш. *Анализ.* Исследование проводилось в период «первой основной волны протестов», то есть с 24-го по 26 октября 2020 года. Участниками были в основном молодые люди, студенты средних школ и университетов. В статье автор подчеркивает роль молодежи в протестах и прежде всего отвечает на два основных исследовательских вопроса: какова была роль «поколения Z» в октябрьских протестах, каких политических взглядов придерживались протестующие. Исследования первых «часов» развития протеста крайне редки, поэтому статья так важна для изучения не только молодежи «поколения Z», но и современных гражданских протестов. *Результаты.* Результаты показывают, что участники протеста (в основном это была молодежь), не относятся к консервативной молодежи и их можно считать новым поколением поляков, которые немного отличаются от своих старших сограждан. Но как и почему молодежь так отличается политическими взглядами?

Ключевые слова: протесты «Женский ад», протест, молодежь, Польша, «поколение Z».

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Introduction. How it began. At the end of October 2020, Poles began a protest against the prospect of tightening abortion laws in Poland. Before the recent legislative amendments that sparked the protest movement, Poland had already been recognized as a country with one of the most restrictive abortion laws among the world's wealthier nations since 1993, when this regulation was adopted [39]. The 3 cases that allowed for abortion in Poland were:

1. When the continuation of pregnancy endangers the woman's life or health.
2. When the pregnancy is a result of a criminal act.
3. When there is a high probability of a severe and irreversible fetal impairment [1].

The prime cause for protests was the judgment issued on October 22, 2020, by the Constitutional Tribunal, which ruled that the possibility of an abortion due to a severe and irreversible fetal impairment or an incurable life-threatening disease is unconstitutional. The protests turned into anti-government and often anti-clerical rallies (participants advocated the separation of church and state). Protests were also organized in churches and near bishops' residences, as the Polish episcopate supported the decision to tighten the abortion law. The protests took place in several hundred cities in Poland and around the world (mostly in front of Polish Embassies), and according to police data, several hundred thousand people took part in them. They are the largest mass demonstrations in Poland since the political transformation in 1989 [35]. On

October 29, 2020, 410 protests were recorded across the country, in which over 430,000 people took part [23]. The protests can be considered as the first signs of political and social changes in Polish society, and it is reasonable to examine its initial stage of development.

The study presents the results of the internet survey in the Facebook group "Women's Hel" from the city of Olkusz (about 40,000 inhabitants – Lesser Poland). Author of the research wants to focus primarily on the role of youth from Generation Z which took part in the October protests. Furthermore, the results were obtained in the first hours of the protest's development, giving pure information about the core participants of the protests.

Review of the literature. It is hard not to notice that the protests that began in Poland are a manifestation of the development of classic new social movements, created mainly by the new generation slowly entering the political scene. This fact prompted the author to present the theory related to new social movements, emphasizing young people's participation and describing the generation that is changing the rules of the political game in Poland. One of the theoretical trends, the emergence of new social movements, is associated with the theory of rising aspirations and the theory of defence of endangered needs [21, p. 8]. Researchers indicate that the emergence of movements is related mainly to the response to modernization processes' adverse effects. The development led to the loss of identity of many social groups, while many other groups

became full participants of public life and often expressed dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs. New social movements persistently present alternative systems of values, somehow opposing those presented by the authorities. One of the most popular is the concept created by Claus Offe. According to the author, the social movement is an effect of a civilization breakthrough related to the modernization process. The takeover of these changes is the collapse of the old social, political and economic order, which is based on the broad liberal-democratic consensus of the welfare state, where economic growth, distribution of wealth and social security mattered the most [30, p. 228]. C. Offe stresses that, in addition to the new middle class and part of the old middle class, the most active group is outside the labour market, such as the unemployed or students. They are represented at the protests by the youth of the Z generation. Treating culture mentioned above as the dominant factor in the perception of youth is postulated by J. Chałasiński [5, p. 39], who writes that “youth is not a natural physiological and hormonal state, but an element of culture, a “social institution” the shape of which entirely depends on the structure and culture of the society. When observing protest movements, which often give rise to social movements, there can be the impression that at least some of them may pose a threat to democracy. They often take on a destructive character, typical of fascism, radical forms of nationalism or totalitarian communism, racism, religious fundamentalism, inciting violence or even terror. These are examples of what the French sociologist M. Wieviorka calls “anti-social movements” [40]. Worth mentioning that young people in Central and Eastern Europe (Generation Z) do not fully believe in democracy, this may affect their propensity to protest as a manifestation of their rights and influence over the state [18, p. 12].

Protests had the most significant number of supporters among the youngest respondents aged 18–24 – in this group almost every third, 29 % – participated in “walks” [38]. The “Z” generation, unlike their predecessors, does not know the world without a computer, telephone, Internet, electronic gadgets. On the one hand, young people (which are their great advantage) show great freedom in using modern technology; they treat its ubiquity as normal. They can function in parallel in the

real and virtual world and smoothly move from one to another (in their opinion, both worlds complement each other). On the other hand, most of the “Z” generation cannot imagine their lives without the new technology and the Internet to which they are connected 24/7. They often stress that they are addicted to it. Besides, many researchers point out that young people impair their verbal communication skills and establish interpersonal contacts in the real world by living online [13; 26]. Most of the logistics related to the October protests took place on the Internet. Even in the smallest cities, such as the discussed Olkusz, an event and a group were created on social networks. Young people could protest in many places and on such a huge scale in Poland due to the development of new technologies and “Facebook events” – first time on such big scale. This shows that the protests, especially in smaller centers, were driven by young Internet users. As analyzed by Polish researcher A. Zietek civic activity in the first two decades of the 21st century, which manifested itself, among other things, in the intensification of the protest movement actions, one may agree with the thesis about the need to redefine the classical understanding of the civic culture. Therefore, it will no longer be a culture based mainly on passive acceptance of actions and decisions made by authorities (both at the local and national level) and adherence to top-down imposed “rules of the game” and behavioural patterns. These principles are increasingly becoming the area of social “struggle” to meet individual social groups’ needs while perceiving the sphere of politics as distortion and caricature of the system of liberal democracy [43, p. 168]. Some studies show that “Gen Z” would like to achieve a stunning career immediately and effortlessly [17, p. 390]. This directness of young people and the pursuit of goals “here and now”, may also explain why the participants of the march are so vulgar, often using slogans considered obscene in Poland. According to the Polish news portal, OKO.PRESS, as many as 80% of the slogans shouted out by protesters contained vulgar words [8]. Generational behavioral characteristics of different age groups can be found in the research conducted by the Central Europe researchers A. Bencsik and R. Machová. For them Z generation members always live for the present that questions the need for self realization;

they feel at home anywhere with lack of consequential thinking. And abilities that “help” with protest activity: rapid reaction to everything, initiator, brave, rapid information access and content search [3, p. 42]. Unlike egoistic and arrogant attitudes of Millennials, generation Z representatives have more protest disposition with their willingness to change the political and social situation “here and now”, regardless of the costs that they demonstrated in October protests. We can not forget that most of Poland’s protests are still in high school, which does not bode well for those Polish political powers that will rule when generation Z receives political rights on a big scale. In sum, a half-century ago the Russian sociologist, V. Lisovskiy, defines the essence of young people and their social characteristics as a transitional generation, as a stage of socialization, professional and cultural assimilation [24]. However, Polish Protests show that nowadays young people increasingly want to create their cultural socialization and not to rely on the existing one.

Methodology. The survey was prepared practically from scratch, the questionnaire was developed in response to public protest and the desire to learn about the motivations of young protesters, and then it was published on the group where the future protesters were organizing themselves. Two hundred people filled the survey with 30 questions. It gives 20% of all persons who were members of the Facebook group at the end of the research. It is difficult to prove that the sample structure reflects the structure of protest participants in Poland as full. Indeed in Olkusz, as in other Polish cities, there were protests in the so-called first wave [36] (e.g. in smaller towns and cities in the region, they were held in the following days). The research comes from the same initial protests period, i.e. October 24–26, 2020. Taking into account the results presented below, namely the number of women participants (79.5%), and the age of the protesters (almost 80% under 35 y.o.), it is hard not to notice that the proportions are typical for protests of the same or similar nature.

The presented results were obtained using an internet survey which was formed according to the “snowball” method, within the Facebook group “Protest Piekio Kobiet Olkusz” (*Women’s Hell protest in Olkusz*)². At the initial stage of its creation, when the numbers of participants were

less than 1000³. The advantages of this internet type research (compared to traditional surveys and questionnaires) included the possibility of collecting personal information and capturing sensitive data [11]. However, the questionnaires were filled in entirely anonymously. Author kept all ethical issues by receiving consent both from the group administrators and participants. The group was hidden at the early stage of the protests and all the new members could get in only by means of personal invitations. Nevertheless, members’ invitation to this group showed that it could be compared to a snowball sampling methodology, which is a convenience sampling method. This method is applied when it is challenging to access subjects with the target characteristics or with hidden populations, the formalization of the sample biases seems to be beyond the reach of current statistics, although admirable attempts have been made [12]. In snowball sampling, selection can be modelled as a stochastic process that permits the calculation of sample weights inversely proportional to the probabilities of selection and can generate unbiased estimates [2, p. 110]. As Ch. Kaplan wrote, sample selection bias formulated in this manner offers a reliable sampling frame, mainly when data from initial respondents, other than other respondents’ selections, are not recorded, and subsequent respondents are selected at random [20]. When connected this method with the trust which gains researcher, it is hard to not agree with A. Cicourel who wrote that the interview is not only a research technique but can and should also be perceived as social interaction [6, pp. 95, 99-100]. Since collecting data was conducted in a few hours after creating the group, and at times of the initial implementation of the protest plans, the survey was one of the few possibilities to reach the respondents during the pandemic. The anonymity of research also allowed reaching those protest participants, who were often afraid due to the authorities’ threats to different social groups, especially the minorities [29]. There was also official information from the ministry of education that “If it is confirmed that some teachers persuaded students to participate in the protests or took part in them themselves, causing a threat during the epidemic and behaving in a way that offends the ethos of their profession, the legal consequences

will be drawn” [31]. It is also worth emphasizing that the people who participated in the protests were young and active internet users. It would be not easy to reach this group with other classic tools such as telephone or paper questionnaires. In addition to methodological advantages, there are also numerous disadvantages. The most serious and widely debated allegation concerns the unavailability of the full-frame Internet user draw. This type of research is often considered not representative and unable to conclude the studied sample on the population. This allegation may be formulated more emphatically: where there is no full or nearly the full sampling frame (i.e. the set that will be used to select the sample), one cannot speak of quantitative research. There are several known ways to solve this problem with many conflicting views focusing on this technique’s methodological aspects. Therefore, many researchers precisely analyzed it [7; 25].

Local news media reported that about 1000 people took part in the protest, which shows that most of them can be members of the FB group [33]. It was interesting in a scientific way to observe how the youth have been organizing and channelizing themselves for the protest. The survey was active only one day before and one after the protest. It is the reason why all collected data can be regarded as probable and authoritative. According to Silverman [37], the choice of qualitative research cases should always be theoretically guided. Yin concludes that qualitative research (case studies in particular) can be generalized to theoretical propositions, but not to populations [41]. For Silverman, the goal much rather is to “expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)” [37]. In this particular case study, a full generalization of the findings is less critical, than scientific capture the moment of formation of a youth protest and collect data conjunction to that case [4; 37]. Gobo proposes applying “interactive, progressive, and iterative sampling” to achieve representativeness. In sum, while the small size and specific characteristics of this sample preclude any broader generalizations, this study aims to use this critical case’s strategic nature to achieve theoretical generalizability [16], through highlighting striking patterns or issues of the most substantial theoretical interest. Summing up, the research is

not representative. Nevertheless, it provides an engaging approach to the social problem of new social movements’ emergence in a powiat-type¹ town during one of the largest social protests in the present-day Poland. It is worth reading the results and using the additional analysis as an exciting voice in the discussion on youth participation (generation Z) in social movements.

The research aims at attempting to describe and explain the social-political profile of the first “Women Hell” protest participants drawing on the example of Olkusz. In the course of the data analysis, the following research questions were considered:

1) What was the role of ‘Generation Z’ in October protests?

2) What are the political views of the protesters?

Results and discussion. The first results shows that most of the relevant Olkusz FB group active participants wanted to participate in the event (87.5%), while only 4.5% refused, and 8% answered ‘hard to say’. The high quantity of determined participants of the group proves the strong aspiration for the protest. A most random person that got added to the Facebook group did not have problems with participation in the demonstration. It shows that for inhabitants “protesting way” to manifest their dissatisfaction for political decisions is quite popular. During the first wave of protests, in the case of Olkusz on October 25, 2020, there was a higher number of cases of COVID-19 (exactly this day there were 30 new cases of COVID-19 in Olkusz region) [14]. Despite this, 68% of respondents were not afraid of going out into the streets and only for over 20% of respondents, it was the information that influenced their decisions. The Foundation Institute asked a similar question for Market and Social Research (IBRiS), which conducted a study on the support of demonstrations during the pandemic. The question whether the protests had to continue in the streets of Polish cities in the current epidemic situation was answered positively by 60.5% of respondents. Concerns about protesting during the epidemic were expressed by 32.4%. The rest, i.e. 7%, were not sure about the issue [28]. But we can not forget that an October protest was for Polish youth, as well opportunity for meet up. As we can notice, most of the people there know one

other for local schools in town. When we add the information that, most of the people taking part in the protests did not believe in their success. We can assume that also a joint meeting had an aim to mobilize young people to go out on the street. Only 26.5% of the respondents believed that the slogans of the protests would bring about a change. 16% of people had a different opinion, and 57.5% did not know the answer. However, even without faith in success, the protests could hardly be called unpopular within the city's inhabitants. Although the participants did not believe that they would be able to win, 78% of them declared that would be still prepared for long-term protests to achieve their goal. Only 3% of the respondents were of the opposite opinion.

At the same time the majority (52.5%) of the respondents did not want to participate in the formation of the government but preferred to be merely well-governed. With 11% of those who do not have an opinion, 36.5% want to participate in political governance. It shows that participants do not dream of taking power; they simply do not support government policy and it had risen to a protest.

60.5% of the respondents believed that Poland does not have democracy. It is a very substantial result, and despite even the negligible representativeness of the research, it is a wake-up call for the authorities. 27.5% believe that there is probably no democracy, about 7% of the respondents have a different opinion, and 5% do not have any opinion at all. Data should be

compared with the representative results, where students from all around Poland answer the same question. The results are opposite – 9.1% of the youth answered that there is “definitely” democracy in Poland, “rather yes” – 43.8%, “rather no” – 23.5% and “not at all” – 5.8%. 17.8% of the respondents were unable to choose any of the above answers [18, p. 11]. The people participating in the research (and protests) assess democracy through the ruling party's prism and their relation to its policy.

Responses about the influence on political power were divided. Nevertheless, most people believed that they do not influence the national government (definitely not – 17%) (Fig. 2).

On the other hand, when it comes to the sense of influence on political power at the city level, it is much better than at the national level. Thus, only 30.5% (in the previous question, the number was almost 50%) believed that there is no influence on – in this case – local government. The number of people who believed that they had influence had grown from 27.5% to 34.5% (Fig. 3).

A significant number of respondents believed that they had no influence on politics both on national and local levels. 86% of people believed that young people's interests and problems were not represented in the public debate (Fig. 4). The protests that took place can be called the “speaker” of the problems of Polish youth, whose voice has long been skipped in the discourse of the government party.

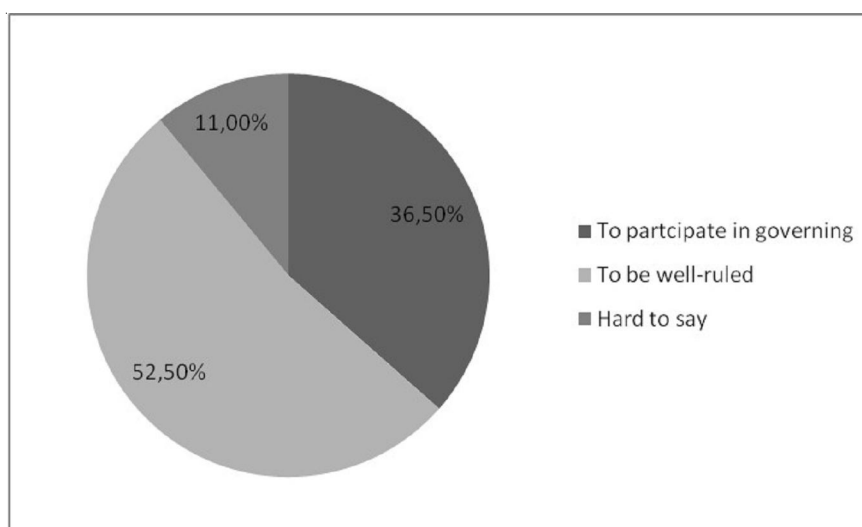


Fig. 1. Question: What do you personally care more about?

Source. Own research.

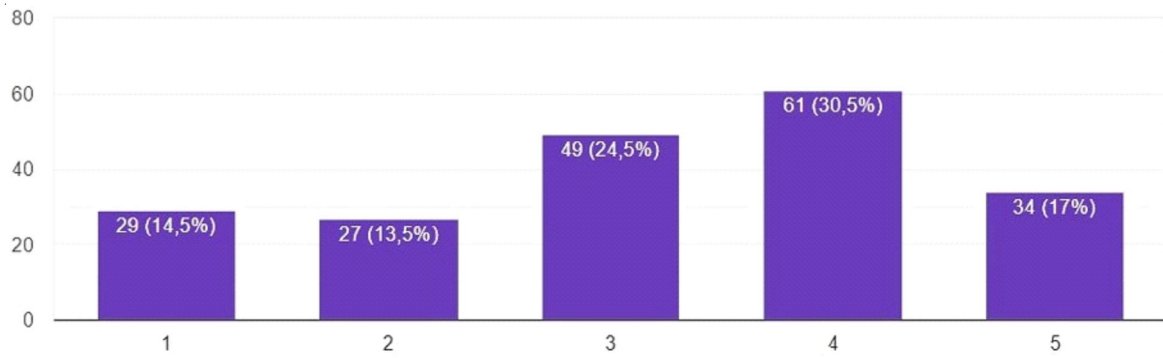


Fig. 2. Question: Do people like you influence the affairs of your country (1 – Definitely yes; 5 – Definitely no)
 Source. Own research.

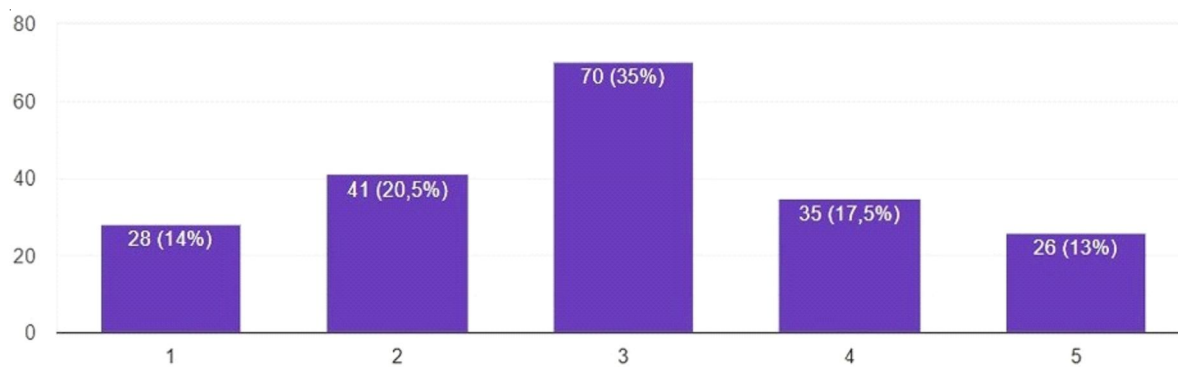


Fig. 3. Question: Do people like you influence the affairs of your Town/village (1 – Definitely yes; 5 – Definitely no)
 Source. Own research.

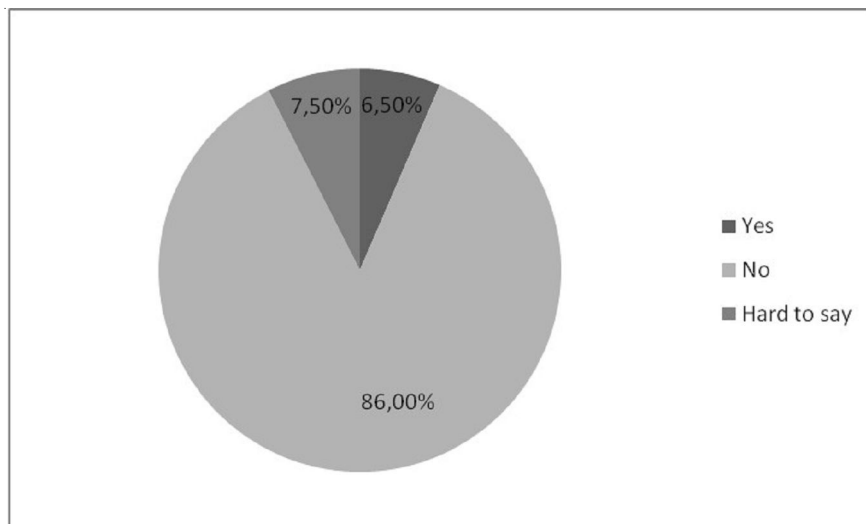


Fig. 4. Question: Do you think young people's interests and problems are sufficiently represented in the public debate

Source. Own research.

A decisive number of respondents (76%) also believed that Poland's Catholic Church played an active part in the conflict; while only 10% of the respondents had the opposite opinion. It should also be emphasized here that these events are not the first, but still one of the most significant symbols of problems which the Polish Catholic Church cannot cope with. Until now, young people were (as it was believed) entirely under the church's ideological influence (e.g. through religion lessons, often starting in kindergarten). However the 25–34 age group is the least religious in Poland – more than half of respondents in this group (51%) are either religiously uncommitted or outside of any religion, and just 17% are either strongly or moderately committed [22]. In 2010, 93% of the surveyed by CBOS youth attended religion classes in schools. However, what is worth noting that, according to research, in the last five years (2013–2018) the number of young people attending religion lessons decreased by 19%. Ipsos research also shows the “retreat” of the church in the minds of young Poles. In the research conducted on 25–27 November 2020, as many as 70% of people aged 18–29 believe that religion lessons should be transferred from schools to churches [32]. This may also indicate a change in the worldview among young people, and explain the significant number of protesters [15, p. 157]. The protests showed that the significant “loud” part of the new youth generation, is not so indifferent but hostile to the church. Even though

the research results suggest that respondents believed the church is involved in the problem, almost half of them (47%) described themselves as believers, 34.5% as atheists, and 18.5% of the respondents found it difficult to answer the question, whether they believed in God. Polish Centre for Public Opinion Research in their report Young 2018 showed quite similar data. 63% (+16%) was believers, 17% (-17.5%) declare that are atheists and there was 21% (-3.5%) undecided. It is not difficult to notice that the youth surveyed in Olkusz are less religious than their colleagues surveyed in 2018. However, it should also be emphasized that, compared to 2016, the number of believing young people decreased by 6%. It may explain the downward trend [15, p. 157]. The research data concerning the 500+ social program⁴, an essential idea of the PiS party to win over voters during the elections, was also impressive. As we can see in the diagrams below, as many as 63.3% of people were the program's opponents, while only 8.7% had a positive attitude towards it, and some 28% of research participants were in two minds (Fig. 1, 4–6, 9–11). Youth that take part in research definitely have a (pro) feminist attitudes. However, according to the CBOS survey results in March 2017, the majority of Poles – 77% – approved of the “500+ Family” programme [9; 10].

In was also important to ask participants about their social activity. It could show how active they were socially and politically. Most of the respondents replied that they had been active in the last year for

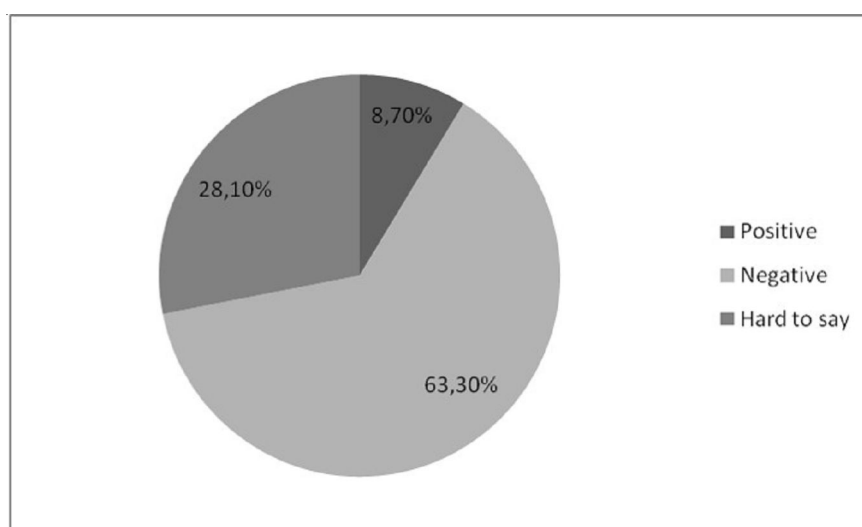


Fig. 5. Question: What is your attitude towards the 500+ program (social benefits for having kids: about 130\$ per child every month until he/she turns 18)

Source. Own research.

their local homeland (57%), while 43% denied such activity. Most people were also active only in signing petitions (54.5%), 17% of people did not undertake any social activity, only less than 10% of people this year participated in protests. The majority of people also believed that Poland's participation in the European Union had brought Poland more benefits than losses (62.5%). Only 3% of the respondents were of the opposite view. 18% of people did not have an opinion on this topic, which shows that many people should be educated and given substantial explanations. This issue is illustrated in figure 6.

In addition 42.5% of the respondents felt as much European as Pole, 22% more Polish than European, and 18.5% more European than Pole. The respondents were also asked whom they voted for in the previous parliamentary elections. As we can see, as many as 19% did not have voting rights a year ago, 6% did not vote. The results show how many young people took part in the protests in Olkusz. For many of the protesters, that was "the first contact with politics". Most of the respondents from Olkusz voted for the Civic Platform and the Democratic Left Alliance. Simultaneously, there were 9% of the far-right "Confederation" party's supporters and some 1% of the ruling Law and Justice party's voters. However, the exit poll research after the first round of presidential elections in June 2020 shows different results. Most voters between 18 and 29 y.o. declared that they voted for Rafał Trzaskowski (Citizens' Platform). Among the youngest voters, he received 23.8%. Just behind

him was Krzysztof Bosak, who collected 23% of votes (Confederation). Szymon Hoiownia gained slightly less support in this group of voters – 22.3% (his party did not run in the last parliamentary elections in 2019). The incumbent President Andrzej Duda, among 18–29 voters, gathered "only" 19.3%. The left-wing candidate – a declared homosexual – Robert Biedroń obtained 7.2% of their voices (Democratic Left Alliance-Spring) [27]. It clearly shows that those who attended the protests in Olkusz had liberal and leftist views (Fig. 7). However, when looking at the results across society, this is only the "noisy minority". The vast majority described their political views as leftist (almost 60%), 32.5% as a centrist, only 10% are people who consider themselves rightists.

The next issue is the approach to sexual relations among people participating in protests. It is reflected in the attitudes towards same-sex marriage since 84% of the respondents supported their legalization in Poland (Fig. 8). Pew Research Center in their "Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey" are showing similar conclusions, 60% of interviewed Poles in age 18-29 y.o. answered that "homosexuality should be accepted by society". As for the other age groups the researchers obtained the following results: people of 30–49 y.o. – 59%, those who are older than 50–33% [34].

Most of the respondents were young people, with 56.5% under 26 years old. It clearly shows that it was the youth that constituted the "core" of the protests at the very beginning.

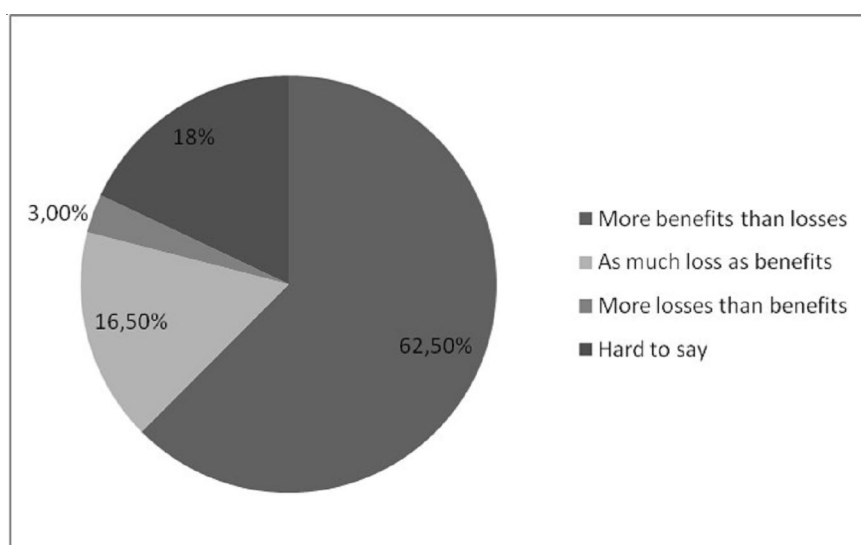


Fig. 6. Question: In your opinion, has membership in the European Union brought Poland
Source. Own research.

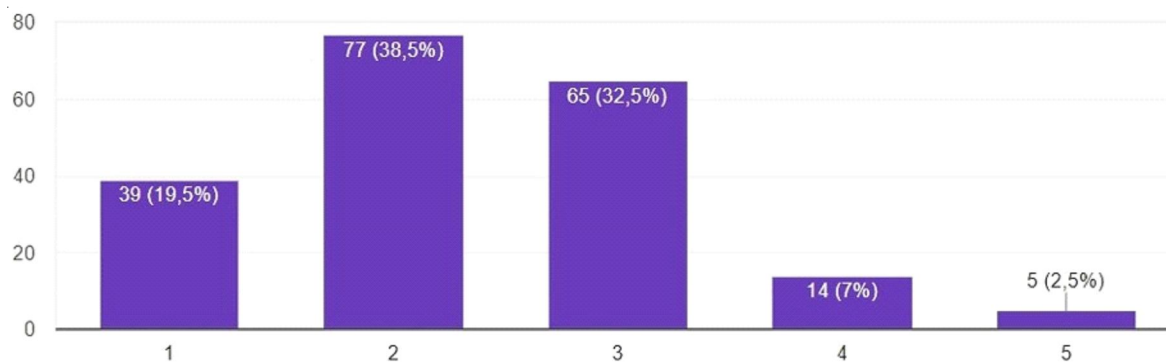


Fig. 7. Question: Where would you place political views on the scale (1 – left-wing views; 5 – right-wing views)
 Source. Own research.

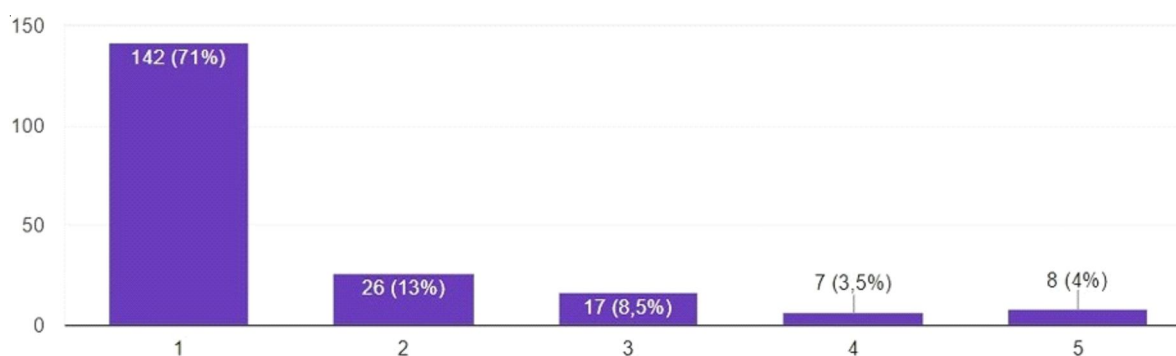


Fig. 8. Question: Please mark your opinion on the following points on the scale
 Source. Own research. 1 – The law should allow same-sex partnership; 5 – The law should not allow same-sex partnership.

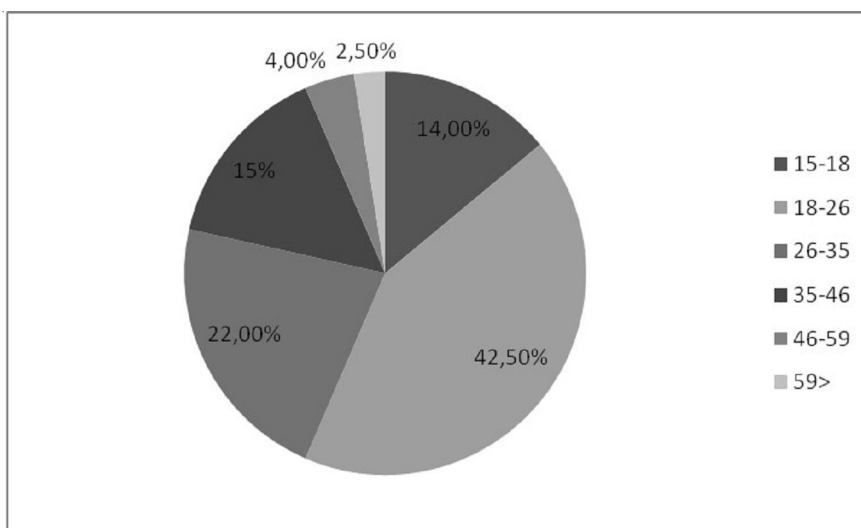


Fig. 9. Question: How old are you?

Source. Own research.

Almost 80% were women, which was obvious considering the subject of the protests.

Only 27.5% of those taking part in the protests were married. The vast majority of the study participants are either single or in an informal relationship, which is quite obvious considering the age of the people participating in the research.

Furthermore, almost 50% of the surveyed people were studying at school or university at the moment. It confirms the thesis that the events were new social movements (taking into account the Claus Offe's definition mentioned above of youth participation in new social movements).

Conclusions. More than half of the surveyed citizens were representatives of the Generation Z. The vast majority of demonstrators (56.5%) were young people (up to 26 years old). Almost 80% were women, and 70% of them were not married. 35 % were still students at a high school or university. "Gen Z" is often described as the generation open to new experiences, creative and innovative, tech-savvy, self-confident, ambitious, flexible, willing to develop and improve their skills continually, quickly adapting to changes. It also promotes freedom and space to be oneself, establishing interpersonal contacts, versatile and

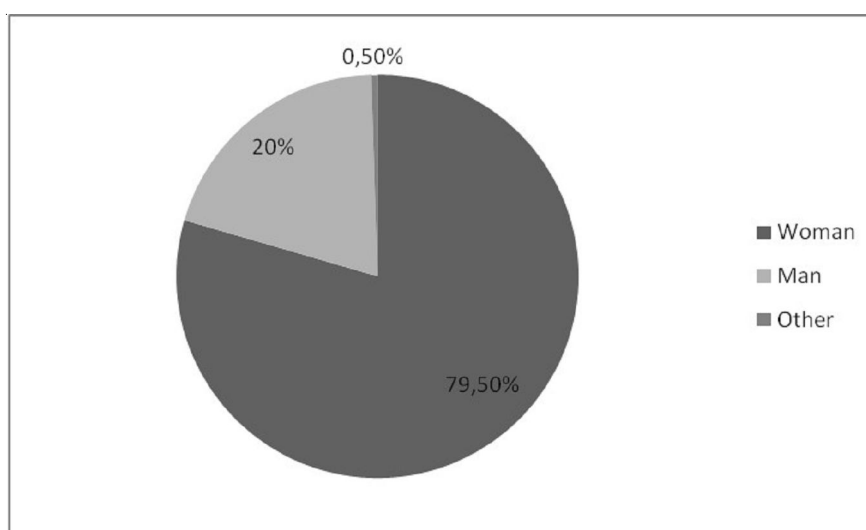


Fig. 10. Question: What is your gender?

Source. Own research.

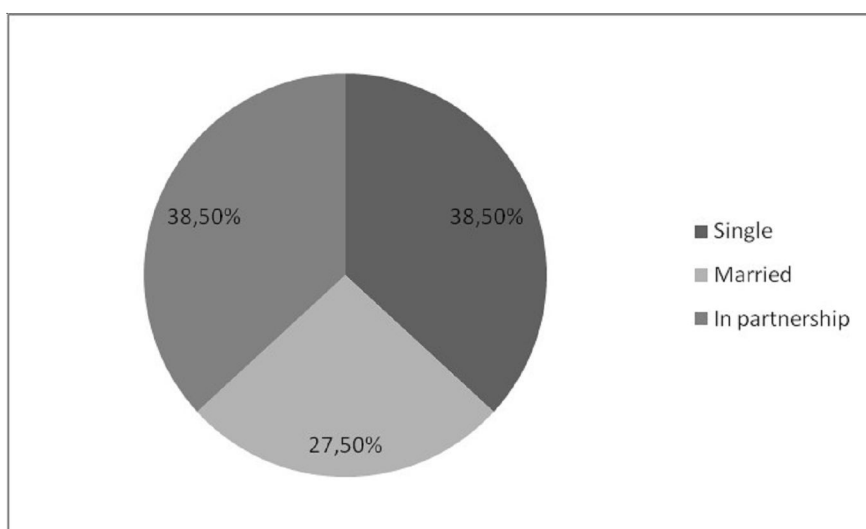


Fig. 11. Question: What is your marital status?

Source. Own research.

multi-tasking, honest and conciliatory and demanding, and full of enthusiasm for work, mutually motivating. This generation also has many negative qualities, like slyness, posturing, entitlement, internet addiction, lack of intrinsic motivation or low motivation, laziness, and unwillingness to become independent [42, p. 409]. Was it the representatives of the generation with these features that we dealt with? It is difficult to get a complete result from the research results, but there are indications that conclude an yes. It is hard not to notice that the organization of the meetings itself, the creation of events on social networks and internet groups show that we deal with people who use new technologies for contact. The generation using this channel on such level is generation Z – maybe this was the reason why there were so many protests in small cities – “magic of social networking events” which were not so popular earlier. The October protests were also a way for some youth to express their views beyond the internet – but what was important for some participants was that it was the only opportunity to meet each other during the pandemic. The youth did not believe in the success of the protests, but the possibility of protesting as a meeting, could also influence the number of youth participants – sometimes it could be first meeting of the full school classes since the beginning of the pandemic. However, it is worth emphasizing that the protesters in Olkusz (and probably also the participants of the protests in other cities) and Polish youth as a whole are not an ideological monolith, what was showed in question about European identification and which political parties they did support. Nevertheless, it should definitely be emphasized that the Olkusz youth participating in the research had feminist views, what they showed by their attitude to the program 500+. Research shows trends in the protesters’ social and political worldviews – the “loudest” part of Polish youth.

Protests wake up political requirements in the new generation. “Loud” part of generation Z, looks like it is not only different than their older colleagues but indeed this is not the youth that have conservative political views – what can be notice in Olkusz data. The research clearly shows that active youth in Olkusz who go out to the streets to protest (thus showing their civic attitudes) have left-wing or liberal political and social views. The success of the protests depends

on how big and strong the social movement will be and what will be the next polish social problems, but it will be as well first political experience for many youth Poles. However, it is worth considering whether the youth will still participate in the protests. It is difficult to predict whether they will continue to be so active after the pandemic. Persistence of the protests cannot be built on spontaneous meetings, but it should be established on the movement’s future institutionalization. Olkusz youth do not believe in the old government, for most of them system in Poland is not a pure democracy, and they see that polish politicians not at all understood their problems. It is also impossible not to notice the vast crisis in which the Catholic Church in Poland found itself – even when we only are analyzing Olkusz case study. “Louders” that took part in research are very liberal, most of them did not vote yet, but they will support the opposition in the next election. The case study of Olkusz clearly shows that we are at a historical moment where the new generation is slowly taking small steps to come to Poland’s political power. Research shows that it is not radical ideology that is pushing the young people to protest [19, p. 232], then the question remains open – is the participation of young people in these protests not a sign of a new generation slowly entering the political arena? On the other hand youth protest in new-Z Gen-type way, which can be characteristic like “vulgar, rude and instant”. An important factor is the lack of understanding of young people by the older generation of politicians. For them, young people, due to their low turnout in elections, are not an exciting target for election promises. However, what should be underlined currently is that, any decision, made by the conservative government aimed at young people may spark further protests. Nevertheless, it is necessary to emphasize that the presented studies are not representative, but they show the characteristics of people who first started organizing protests in a small town of Olkusz. It can be the first bell of change based on the new generation that will come to the political scene.

NOTES

¹ Powiat is the second-level local government and administration unit in Poland, equivalent to a county, district or prefecture in other countries.

² All over Poland in every cities there was made FB groups with information about the protest. It was mostly only possible to exchange information about organization moments – and main: “when and where”.

³ As of December 6, 2020, the number of members in the group is approximately 5800 people.

⁴ The “500+ Family” (“Rodzina 500+”) programme was launched on April 1 2016. By the end of July 2017, more than 3.99 million children under the age of 18 had received support from the government’s “Family 500+” programme, and over 2.6 million families had been provided with benefits totalling over PLN 31.2 billion [9]. One of the major concerns of the “Family 500+” programme is that the additional non-work income may hurt the labour market. Workers with low wages may have lower incentives to be active, and women, in particular, might be encouraged to stay home and take care of children [10].

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