

## Environmental Awareness of Poles

### Descriptive Analysis of Tabular Data

**Subject:** Identification of trends related to the environmental awareness of Poles based on the source tables. The analysis should include hypothetical causes of the observed trends, drawing on one's own observational knowledge of events in Poland and around the world.

Tabular data<sup>1</sup>:

TABLE 2

To what extent is the condition of the natural environment in <b>Poland</b> a source of concern for you?	Respondents' indications by the dates on which the studies were conducted											
	1993*	1997*	1999	2000	2006	2008	2009	2011	2014	2016	2018	2020
	In percentages											
To a very large or large extent	78	71	58	51	40	61	50	46	41	45	68	53
To a small extent	13	20	30	36	45	28	38	40	43	43	25	35
To no extent at all	3	4	6	7	7	5	7	8	10	4	4	7
Difficult to say	6	5	5	6	8	6	5	6	6	8	4	5

\* In 1993 and 1997, studies on ecology were conducted on behalf of the Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD)

TABLE 3

To what extent is the condition of the natural environment <b>on Earth, worldwide</b> , a source of concern for you?	Respondents' indications by the dates on which the studies were conducted						
	2006	2008	2009	2014	2016	2018	2020
	In percentages						
To a very large or large extent	58	69	61	63	71	79	70
To a small extent	27	19	26	24	16	12	18
To no extent at all	5	5	6	4	4	2	4
Difficult to say	10	7	7	9	9	7	8

<sup>1</sup>Own translation based on: *Malgorzata Omyla-Rudzka (ed.), Environmental Awareness of Poles, CBOS Research Report 163/2020 (CBOS Report, accessed on: 26 March 2021)*

The data presented in the set of tables show the distribution of respondents' answers regarding their level of concern about the state of the natural environment in Poland between 1993 and 2020, and worldwide between 2006 and 2020. The figures included in the tables make it possible to assess the level of environmental awareness among Poles and their attitudes toward the condition of the natural environment. Based on the conducted studies, a decline was recorded between 1993 and 2006 in the percentage of people who were highly or very highly concerned about the state of the natural environment in Poland. This downward trend continued in the following years (2009–2014), before rising again in 2016 and 2018. The upward trend was interrupted in 2020. Similar patterns were observed in the studies conducted between 2006 and 2020 regarding concern about the state of the natural environment worldwide. Moreover, in every year in which respondents were asked about their level of concern both in Poland and globally (2006, 2008, 2009, 2014, 2018, 2020), more people expressed concern about the global environment than about the environment in Poland.

For both questions—concerning the state of the natural environment in Poland and worldwide—the largest group of respondents consisted of those who declared that they were concerned to a very large or large extent (with the exception of 2006 and 2014 for the question about Poland; in those years, the largest group consisted of respondents who indicated that their concern was small, with differences of 5% and 2% respectively). This group may be so large due to the increasing amount of media coverage related to the climate crisis.

The level of concern about the natural environment depends on many factors. It is influenced by current social, political, economic, and other events, as well as by the themes emphasized in media communication. A few examples are provided below. The significant decrease in concern about the natural environment in Poland in 1999 may have been influenced by events occurring at that time, such as the administrative reform (division into 16 voivodeships), Poland's accession to NATO, farmers' and healthcare workers' strikes, the visit of Pope John Paul II, the Women's European Basketball Championship held in Poland and won by the Polish national team for the first time, as well as other sporting events.

The decline in concern about the natural environment in Poland in 2011 may have been related to the lingering public impact of the 2010 Smolensk air disaster, in which 96 people died, including the Polish presidential couple, as well as the 2011 Fukushima earthquake, which caused the meltdown of three nuclear reactors and resulted in radioactive contamination. As a consequence, many countries (including Germany) began to view this ecological method of energy production more critically.

The increase in concern about the natural environment in Poland in 2016 compared to 2014 may have been influenced by the government's decision to allow logging in state forests in 2016. In 2014, subsidies for replacing heating systems and installing photovoltaic panels using European Union funds were introduced. Since then, the environmental impact of old heating systems and the availability of subsidies for new ones have been increasingly publicized. The project continues, which may have contributed to the sustained rise in interest in environmental issues in the country (according to the table, this trend continued until 2018). The decrease in concern in 2020 compared to 2018 may have been caused by the coronavirus pandemic, which began at the end of 2019. The pandemic brought concerns about personal and family health, as well as, for many people, evaluations of government actions. Threats to health affect one of the most fundamental human needs, which may explain why environmental issues were pushed into the background. The decline might have been even greater if not for the increased visibility of Greta Thunberg's pro-environmental activism in 2018 and the Amazon wildfires in 2019, which drew attention to ecological problems. Rising concern about the natural environment may influence individual choices—from purchasing recycled or recyclable products, to buying second-hand items, to applying for subsidies to replace old heating systems or installing photovoltaic panels. New technological solutions using renewable energy sources continue to emerge, along with media promoting vegetarianism or healthy eating, and zero-waste trends. All these actions can have a real impact on the state of the natural environment. Conversely, a lack of interest in environmental issues and failure to take appropriate action can have negative consequences for both the environment and society. Examples include severe air pollution in China, where wearing masks is often recommended to protect against smog; the Kraków Smog Alert, established due to high pollution levels; and the fact that in 2013, the *New York Times* listed Kraków among the most polluted cities in Europe. Other consequences of environmental neglect include the Great Pacific Garbage Patch—a 120-ton mass of plastic waste drifting in the Pacific Ocean—and the ongoing extinction of coral reefs.