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**Poland** ([Template:Lang-pl](/wiki/Template:Lang-pl) [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl)), officially the **Republic of Poland** ([Template:Lang-pl](/wiki/Template:Lang-pl),[Template:Ref label](/wiki/Template:Ref_label) [Template:Audio](/wiki/Template:Audio)), is a country in [Central Europe](/wiki/Central_Europe),[[1]](#cite_note-1) [bordered](/wiki/Borders_of_Poland) by [Germany](/wiki/Germany) to the west; the [Czech Republic](/wiki/Czech_Republic) and [Slovakia](/wiki/Slovakia) to the south; [Ukraine](/wiki/Ukraine) and [Belarus](/wiki/Belarus) to the east; and the [Baltic Sea](/wiki/Baltic_Sea), [Kaliningrad Oblast](/wiki/Kaliningrad_Oblast) (a [Russian](/wiki/Russia) [exclave](/wiki/Enclave_and_exclave)) and [Lithuania](/wiki/Lithuania) to the north. The total [area of Poland](/wiki/Area_of_Poland) is [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert),[[2]](#cite_note-2) making it the [69th largest country](/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_area) in the world and the 9th largest in Europe. With a population of over 38.5 million people,[[2]](#cite_note-2) Poland is the [34th most populous country](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population) in the world,[[3]](#cite_note-3) the 8th most populous country in Europe and the sixth most populous [member of the European Union](/wiki/Member_state_of_the_European_Union), as well as the most populous [post-communist](/wiki/Post-communist) member of the European Union. Poland is a [unitary state](/wiki/Unitary_state) divided into 16 [administrative subdivisions](/wiki/Voivodeships_of_Poland).

The establishment of a Polish state can be traced back to 966, when [Mieszko I](/wiki/Mieszko_I_of_Poland),[[4]](#cite_note-4) ruler of a territory roughly coextensive with that of present-day Poland, converted to Christianity. The [Kingdom of Poland](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Poland_(1025–1385)) was founded in 1025, and in 1569 it cemented [a longstanding political association](/wiki/Polish–Lithuanian_union) with the [Grand Duchy of Lithuania](/wiki/Grand_Duchy_of_Lithuania) by signing the [Union of Lublin](/wiki/Union_of_Lublin). This union formed the [Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth](/wiki/Polish–Lithuanian_Commonwealth), one of the largest and most populous countries of 16th and 17th-century Europe.[[5]](#cite_note-5)[[6]](#cite_note-6) The Commonwealth ceased to exist in the years 1772–1795, when its [territory was partitioned](/wiki/Partitions_of_Poland) among [Prussia](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Prussia), the [Russian Empire](/wiki/Russian_Empire), and [Austria](/wiki/Habsburg_Monarchy). [Poland regained its independence](/wiki/History_of_Poland_(1918–39)) (as the [Second Polish Republic](/wiki/Second_Polish_Republic)) at the end of [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I), in 1918.

In September 1939, [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II) started with the invasions of Poland by [Nazi Germany](/wiki/Nazi_Germany) and the [Soviet Union](/wiki/Soviet_Union) (as part of the [Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact](/wiki/Molotov–Ribbentrop_Pact)). More than six million Polish citizens died in the war.[[7]](#cite_note-7)<ref name=szma>[Tomasz Szarota](/wiki/Tomasz_Szarota) & Wojciech Materski, *Polska 1939–1945. Straty osobowe i ofiary represji pod dwiema okupacjami*, Warsaw, IPN 2009, ISBN 978-83-7629-067-6 ([Introduction online.](http://niniwa2.cba.pl/polska_1939_1945.htm))</ref> In 1944, a Soviet-backed [Polish Committee of National Liberation](/wiki/Polish_Committee_of_National_Liberation) was formed and, after a falsified [referendum](/wiki/Polish_people's_referendum,_1946) in 1947, it took control of the country and Poland became a [satellite state](/wiki/Satellite_state)[[8]](#cite_note-8) of the [Soviet Union](/wiki/Soviet_Union), as [People's Republic of Poland](/wiki/People's_Republic_of_Poland). During the [Revolutions of 1989](/wiki/Revolutions_of_1989) Poland's Communist government was overthrown and Poland adopted a new constitution establishing itself as a democracy. Despite [the large number of casualties](/wiki/World_War_II_casualties_of_Poland) and destruction the country [experienced during World War II](/wiki/Occupation_of_Poland_(1939–45)), Poland managed to preserve much of [its cultural wealth](/wiki/Culture_of_Poland). There are 14 heritage sites inscribed on the [UNESCO](/wiki/UNESCO) [World Heritage](/wiki/List_of_World_Heritage_Sites_of_Poland)[[9]](#cite_note-9) and 54 [Historical Monuments](/wiki/List_of_Historic_Monuments_(Poland)) and many [objects of cultural heritage in Poland](/wiki/Objects_of_cultural_heritage_in_Poland).

Since the beginning of the transition to a primarily market-based economy that took place in the early 1990s, Poland has achieved a "very high" ranking on the [Human Development Index](/wiki/Human_Development_Index),[[10]](#cite_note-10) as well as gradually improving economic freedom.[[11]](#cite_note-11) Poland is a democratic country with an advanced high-income economy,[[12]](#cite_note-12) a high quality of life and a very high standard of living.[[13]](#cite_note-13)[[14]](#cite_note-14) Moreover, the country is visited by nearly 16 million tourists every year (2013), which makes it one of the most visited countries in the world.[[15]](#cite_note-15) Poland is the sixth largest [economy in the European Union](/wiki/Economy_of_the_European_Union) and among the fastest rising economic states in the world. The country is the sole member nation of the European Union to have escaped a decline in [GDP](/wiki/GDP) and in recent years was able to "create probably the most varied GDP growth in its history" according to [OANDA](/wiki/Oanda_Corporation), a Canadian-based [foreign exchange](/wiki/Foreign_exchange_market) company.[[16]](#cite_note-16) Furthermore, according to the [Global Peace Index](/wiki/Global_Peace_Index) for 2014, Poland is one of the safest countries in the world to live in.[[17]](#cite_note-17)

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) The origin of the name *Poland* derives from a [West Slavic](/wiki/West_Slavs) tribe of [Polans](/wiki/Polans_(western)) (*Polanie*) that inhabited the [Warta River](/wiki/Warta_River) basin of the historic [Greater Poland](/wiki/Greater_Poland) region in the 8th-century. The origin of the name *Polanie* itself derives from the western Slavic word *pole* (field). In some foreign languages such as Hungarian, Lithuanian, Persian and Turkish the exonym for Poland is [Lechites](/wiki/Lechites) (*Lechici*), which derives from the name of a semi-legendray ruler of Polans, [Lech I](/wiki/Lech,_Czech,_and_Rus).

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

### Prehistory and protohistory[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|Reconstruction of a](/wiki/File:Biskupin_-_gate_and_wall.jpg) [Bronze Age](/wiki/Bronze_Age), [Lusatian culture](/wiki/Lusatian_culture) settlement in [Biskupin](/wiki/Biskupin), c. 700 BC

Historians have postulated that throughout [Late Antiquity](/wiki/Late_Antiquity), many distinct ethnic groups populated the regions of what is now Poland. The [ethnicity](/wiki/Ethnic_group) and [linguistic](/wiki/Linguistics) affiliation of these groups have been hotly debated; the time and route of the original settlement of [Slavic peoples](/wiki/Slavic_peoples) in these regions lacks written records and can only be defined as fragmented.[[18]](#cite_note-18) The most famous archaeological find from [the prehistory and protohistory of Poland](/wiki/Prehistory_and_protohistory_of_Poland) is the [Biskupin](/wiki/Biskupin) fortified settlement (now reconstructed as an open-air museum), dating from the [Lusatian culture](/wiki/Lusatian_culture) of the early [Iron Age](/wiki/Iron_Age), around 700 BC. The Slavic groups who would form Poland migrated to these areas in the second half of the 5th century AD. Up until the creation of [Mieszko's](/wiki/Mieszko_I_of_Poland) state and his subsequent conversion to [Christianity](/wiki/Christianity) in 966 AD, the main religion of Slavic tribes that inhabited the geographical area of present-day Poland was [Slavic paganism](/wiki/Slavic_mythology). With the [Baptism of Poland](/wiki/Baptism_of_Poland) the Polish rulers accepted Christianity and the religious authority of the [Roman Church](/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church). However, the transition from paganism was not a smooth and instantaneous process for the rest of the population as evident from the [pagan reaction of the 1030s](/wiki/Pagan_reaction_in_Poland).[[19]](#cite_note-19)

### Piast dynasty[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Map of Poland under the rule of](/wiki/File:Polska_960_-_992.svg) [Mieszko I](/wiki/Mieszko_I) who is considered the [*de facto*](/wiki/De_facto) creator of the Polish state, c. 960–992

Poland began to form into a recognizable unitary and [territorial entity](/wiki/Territorial_entity) around the middle of the 10th century under the [Piast dynasty](/wiki/Piast_dynasty). Poland's first [historically documented](/wiki/List_of_Polish_monarchs) ruler, [Mieszko I](/wiki/Mieszko_I_of_Poland), accepted [Christianity](/wiki/Christianity) with the [Baptism of Poland](/wiki/Baptism_of_Poland) in 966, as the new [official religion](/wiki/State_religion) of his subjects. The bulk of [the population converted](/wiki/Baptism_of_Poland) in the course of the next few centuries. In 1000, [Boleslaw the Brave](/wiki/Bolesław_I_Chrobry), continuing the policy of his father Mieszko, held a [Congress of Gniezno](/wiki/Congress_of_Gniezno) and created the [metropolis](/wiki/Metropolis_(religious_jurisdiction)) of [Gniezno](/wiki/Gniezno) and the [dioceses](/wiki/Diocese) of [Kraków](/wiki/Kraków), [Kołobrzeg](/wiki/Kołobrzeg), and [Wrocław](/wiki/Wrocław). However, the pagan unrest led to the transfer of the capital to Kraków in 1038 by [Casimir I the Restorer](/wiki/Casimir_I_the_Restorer).[[20]](#cite_note-20) [thumb|upright|left|Earliest known contemporary depiction of a Polish ruler — King](/wiki/File:Darstellung_Mieszkos_und_Mathildes_von_Schwaben.jpg) [Mieszko II Lambert](/wiki/Mieszko_II_Lambert) of Poland being presented with a [Liturgical book](/wiki/Liturgical_book) by [Matilda of Swabia](/wiki/Matilda_of_Swabia), 1025–1031

In 1109, Prince [Bolesław III Wrymouth](/wiki/Bolesław_III_Wrymouth) defeated the King of Germany [Henry V](/wiki/Henry_V,_Holy_Roman_Emperor) at the [Battle of Hundsfeld](/wiki/Battle_of_Hundsfeld), stopping the German march into Poland. The significance of the event was documented by [Gallus Anonymus](/wiki/Gallus_Anonymus) in [his 1118 chronicle](/wiki/Gesta_principum_Polonorum).[[21]](#cite_note-21) In 1138, Poland fragmented into several smaller duchies when Bolesław divided his lands among his sons. In 1226, [Konrad I of Masovia](/wiki/Konrad_I_of_Masovia), one of the regional [Piast](/wiki/Piast) dukes, invited the [Teutonic Knights](/wiki/Teutonic_Knights) to help him fight the [Baltic](/wiki/Balts) [Prussian](/wiki/Old_Prussians) pagans; a decision which led to centuries of warfare with the Knights. In 1264, the [Statute of Kalisz](/wiki/Statute_of_Kalisz) or the General Charter of Jewish Liberties introduced numerous right for the Jews in Poland, leading to a nearly autonomous "nation within a nation".[[22]](#cite_note-22) In the middle of 13th-century the Silesian branch of the Piast dynasty ([Henry I the Bearded](/wiki/Henry_I_the_Bearded) and [Henry II the Pious](/wiki/Henry_II_the_Pious), ruled 1238–1241) nearly succeeded in uniting the Polish lands, but the [Mongols](/wiki/First_Mongol_invasion_of_Poland) invaded the country from the east and defeated the combined Polish forces at the [Battle of Legnica](/wiki/Battle_of_Legnica) where Duke Henry II the Pious died. In 1320, after a number of earlier unsuccessful attempts by regional rulers at uniting the Polish dukedoms, [Władysław I](/wiki/Władysław_I_the_Elbow-high) consolidated his power, took the throne and became the first king of [a reunified Poland](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Poland_(1025–1385)). His son, [Casimir III](/wiki/Casimir_III_the_Great) (reigned 1333–1370), has a reputation as one of the greatest Polish kings, and gained wide recognition for improving the country's infrastructure.[[23]](#cite_note-23)[[24]](#cite_note-24) He also extended royal protection to [Jews](/wiki/Jews), and encouraged their immigration to Poland.[[23]](#cite_note-23)[[25]](#cite_note-25) Casimir III realized that the nation needed a class of educated people, especially lawyers, who could codify the country's laws and administer the courts and offices. His efforts to create an institution of higher learning in Poland were finally rewarded when [Pope Urban V](/wiki/Pope_Urban_V) granted him permission to open the [University of Kraków](/wiki/Jagiellonian_University).

[thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:Casimir_the_Great_by_Leopold_Löffler.PNG)[Casimir III the Great](/wiki/Casimir_III_the_Great) is the only Polish King to receive the title of *"Great"*. He built extensively during his reign, and reformed the Polish army along with the country's civil and criminal laws, 1333–1370

The [Golden Liberty](/wiki/Golden_Liberty) of the nobles began to develop under Casimir's rule, when in return for their [military support](/wiki/Pospolite_ruszenie), the king made a series of concessions to the nobility, and establishing their legal status as superior to that of the townsmen. When Casimir the Great died in 1370, leaving no legitimate male heir, the [Piast dynasty](/wiki/Piast_dynasty) came to an end.

During the 12th and 13th-centuries, Poland became a destination for German, Flemish and to a lesser extent Scottish, Danish and Walloon migrants. Also, the Jewish and Armenian community began to settle and flourish in Poland during this era (see [History of the Jews in Poland](/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Poland) and [Armenians in Poland](/wiki/Armenians_in_Poland)).

The [Black Death](/wiki/Black_Death), a plague that ravaged Europe from 1347 to 1351 did not significantly affect Poland and the country only suffered a minor outbreak.[[26]](#cite_note-26)[[27]](#cite_note-27) The reason for this was the decision of Casimir the Great to quarantine the nation's borders.

### Jagiellon dynasty[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [left|thumb|upright|Drawing of the](/wiki/File:Battle_of_Tannenberg.jpg) [Battle of Grunwald](/wiki/Battle_of_Grunwald), which was fought against the [German Order of Teutonic Knights](/wiki/Teutonic_Knights), 15 July 1410

The [Jagiellon dynasty](/wiki/Jagiellon_dynasty) spanned the late [Middle Ages](/wiki/Middle_Ages) and early [Modern Era](/wiki/Modern_history) of Polish history. Beginning with the [Lithuanian Grand Duke](/wiki/Grand_Duke_of_Lithuania) [Jogaila](/wiki/Jogaila) (Władysław II Jagiełło), the Jagiellon dynasty (1386–1572) formed the [Polish–Lithuanian union](/wiki/Polish–Lithuanian_union). The partnership brought vast [Lithuania](/wiki/Grand_Duchy_of_Lithuania)-controlled [Rus' areas](/wiki/Rus'_(people)) into Poland's sphere of influence and proved beneficial for the Poles and [Lithuanians](/wiki/Lithuanians), who coexisted and cooperated in one of the largest [political entities](/wiki/Personal_union) in Europe for the next four centuries. In the Baltic Sea region Poland's struggle with the Teutonic Knights continued and culminated in the [Battle of Grunwald](/wiki/Battle_of_Grunwald) (1410), where a combined Polish-Lithuanian army inflicted a decisive victory against the Teutonic Knights, allowing for territorial expansion of both nations into the far north region of [Livonia](/wiki/Livonia).[[28]](#cite_note-28) In 1466, after the [Thirteen Years' War](/wiki/Thirteen_Years'_War_(1454–66)), King [Casimir IV Jagiellon](/wiki/Casimir_IV_Jagiellon) gave royal consent to the [Peace of Thorn](/wiki/Second_Peace_of_Thorn_(1466)), which created the future [Duchy of Prussia](/wiki/Duchy_of_Prussia), a Polish vassal. The Jagiellon dynasty at one point also established dynastic control over the kingdoms of [Bohemia](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Bohemia) (1471 onwards) and [Hungary](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Hungary).[[29]](#cite_note-29)[[30]](#cite_note-30) In the south, Poland confronted the [Ottoman Empire](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) and the [Crimean Tatars](/wiki/Crimean_Khanate) (by whom they were attacked on 75 separate occasions between 1474 and 1569),[[31]](#cite_note-31) and in the east helped Lithuania fight the [Grand Duchy of Moscow](/wiki/Grand_Duchy_of_Moscow). Some historians estimate that Crimean Tatar slave-raiding cost Poland-Lithuania one million of its population between the years of 1494 and 1694.[[32]](#cite_note-32)[thumb|400px|](/wiki/File:Zabudowa_Wzgórza_Wawelskiego_(widok_z_wieży_kościoła_Mariackiego);_A-7;_PL-MA,_Kraków,_Wawel.jpg)[Wawel Castle](/wiki/Wawel_Castle) in [Kraków](/wiki/Kraków) — the seat of Polish kings from 1038 until the capital was moved to [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw) in 1596. The royal residence is an early example of [Renaissance](/wiki/Renaissance_in_Poland) architecture in Poland Poland was developing as a [feudal](/wiki/Feudalism) state, with a predominantly agricultural economy and an increasingly powerful [landed nobility](/wiki/Landed_nobility). The [*Nihil novi*](/wiki/Nihil_novi) act adopted by the Polish [Sejm](/wiki/General_sejm) (parliament) in 1505, transferred most of the [legislative power](/wiki/Legislature) from the monarch to the Sejm, an event which marked the beginning of the period known as "Golden Liberty", when the state was ruled by the "free and equal" [Polish nobility](/wiki/Szlachta). [Protestant Reformation](/wiki/Protestant_Reformation) movements made deep inroads into Polish Christianity, which resulted in the establishment of policies promoting [religious tolerance](/wiki/Religious_toleration), unique in Europe at that time.[[33]](#cite_note-33) This tolerance allowed the country to avoid most the religious turmoil that spread over Europe during the 16th-century.[[33]](#cite_note-33) The European [Renaissance](/wiki/Renaissance) evoked in late Jagiellon Poland (kings [Sigismund I the Old](/wiki/Sigismund_I_the_Old) and [Sigismund II Augustus](/wiki/Sigismund_II_Augustus)) a sense of urgency in the need to promote a [cultural awakening](/wiki/Renaissance_in_Poland), and during this period Polish culture and the nation's economy flourished. In 1543, [Nicolaus Copernicus](/wiki/Nicolaus_Copernicus) a Polish astronomer from [Toruń](/wiki/Toruń), published his epochal work [*De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*](/wiki/De_revolutionibus_orbium_coelestium) (*On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*), and thus became the first proponent of a predictive mathematical model confirming the [heliocentric theory](/wiki/Copernican_heliocentrism), which became the accepted basic model for the practice of modern astronomy. Another major figure associated with the era is the classicist poet [Jan Kochanowski](/wiki/Jan_Kochanowski).[[34]](#cite_note-34)

### Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|The](/wiki/File:Akt_Konfederacji_Warszawskiej.jpg) [Warsaw Confederation](/wiki/Warsaw_Confederation) was an important development in the history of Poland that extended religious freedoms and tolerance, and is the first such document in Europe, 28 January 1573

The 1569 [Union of Lublin](/wiki/Union_of_Lublin) established the [Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth](/wiki/Polish–Lithuanian_Commonwealth), a more closely unified federal state with an [elective monarchy](/wiki/Elective_monarchy), but which was governed largely by the nobility, through a system of [local assemblies](/wiki/Sejmik) with a central parliament. The [Warsaw Confederation](/wiki/Warsaw_Confederation) (1573) confirmed the [religious freedom](/wiki/Religious_freedom) of all residents of Poland, which was extremely important for the stability of the multiethnic Polish society of the time.[[22]](#cite_note-22) [Serfdom](/wiki/Serfdom) was banned in 1588.[[35]](#cite_note-35) The establishment of the Commonwealth coincided with a period of stability and prosperity in Poland, with the union thereafter becoming a European power and a major cultural entity, occupying approximately one million square kilometers of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as an agent for the dissemination of [Western culture](/wiki/Western_culture) through [Polonization](/wiki/Polonization) into areas of modern-day Ukraine, Belarus and Western Russia.

In the 16th and 17th-centuries, [Poland](/wiki/Polish–Lithuanian_Commonwealth) suffered from a number of dynastic crises during the reigns of the [Vasa](/wiki/House_of_Vasa) kings [Sigismund III](/wiki/Sigismund_III_Vasa) and [Władysław IV](/wiki/Władysław_IV_Vasa) and found itself engaged in major conflicts with [Russia](/wiki/Tsardom_of_Russia), Sweden and the Ottoman Empire, as well as a series of minor [Cossack](/wiki/Cossacks) uprisings.[[36]](#cite_note-36) In 1610 [Hetman](/wiki/Hetman) [Stanisław Żółkiewski](/wiki/Stanisław_Żółkiewski) seized Moscow after winning the [Battle of Klushino](/wiki/Battle_of_Klushino).

[thumb|300px|The](/wiki/File:Polish-Lithuanian_Commonwealth_in_1635.svg) [Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth](/wiki/Polish–Lithuanian_Commonwealth) at its greatest extent after the [Truce of Deulino](/wiki/Truce_of_Deulino), 1619

From the middle of the 17th-century, the nobles' democracy, suffering from internal disorder, gradually declined, thus leaving the once powerful Commonwealth vulnerable to foreign intervention. Starting in 1648, the [Cossack](/wiki/Cossack) [Khmelnytsky Uprising](/wiki/Khmelnytsky_Uprising) engulfed the south and east eventually leaving [Ukraine](/wiki/Ukraine) divided, with the eastern part, lost by the Commonwealth, becoming a dependency of the Tsardom of Russia. This was followed by the ['Deluge', a Swedish invasion](/wiki/Deluge_(history)) of Poland, which marched through the Polish heartlands and ruined the country's population, culture and infrastructure. Around four million of Poland's eleven million inhabitants died in famines and epidemics.[[37]](#cite_note-37) However, under [John III Sobieski](/wiki/John_III_Sobieski) the Commonwealth's military prowess was re-established, and in 1683 Polish forces played a major role in the [Battle of Vienna](/wiki/Battle_of_Vienna) against the [Ottoman Army](/wiki/Ottoman_Army_(15th-19th_centuries)), commanded by [Kara Mustafa](/wiki/Kara_Mustafa_Pasha) the grand vizier of the [Ottoman Empire](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire).

[thumb|left|upright|Painting of King](/wiki/File:Siemiginowski_Sobieski_at_the_Battle_of_Vienna.jpg) [John III Sobieski](/wiki/John_III_Sobieski) after the [Battle of Vienna](/wiki/Battle_of_Vienna) against the [Ottoman Turks](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire), 12 September 1683

Sobieski's reign marked the end of the nation's golden-era. Finding itself subjected to almost constant warfare and suffering enormous population losses as well as massive damage to its economy, the Commonwealth fell into decline. The government became ineffective as a result of large-scale internal conflicts (e.g. [Lubomirski Rebellion](/wiki/Lubomirski_Rebellion) against [John II Casimir](/wiki/John_II_Casimir_Vasa) and rebellious [confederations](/wiki/Confederation_(Poland))) and corrupted legislative processes. The nobility fell under the control of a handful of [*magnats*](/wiki/Magnat_(Poland)), and this, compounded with two relatively weak kings of the [Saxon](/wiki/Electorate_of_Saxony) [Wettin dynasty](/wiki/House_of_Wettin), [Augustus II](/wiki/Augustus_II_the_Strong) and [Augustus III](/wiki/Augustus_III_of_Poland), as well as the rise of [Russia](/wiki/Russian_Empire) and [Prussia](/wiki/Prussia) after the [Great Northern War](/wiki/Great_Northern_War) only served to worsen the Commonwealth's plight. Despite this The Commonwealth-Saxony [personal union](/wiki/Personal_union) gave rise to the emergence of the Commonwealth's first reform movement, and laid the foundations for the [Polish Enlightenment](/wiki/Enlightenment_in_Poland).[[38]](#cite_note-38) [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:Stanisław_II_August_Poniatowski_in_coronation_clothes.PNG)[Stanisław II August](/wiki/Stanisław_II_August), the last King of Poland — acceded to the throne in 1764 and reigning until his abdication on 25 November 1795

During the later part of the 18th-century, the Commonwealth made attempts to implement fundamental internal reforms; with the second half of the century bringing a much improved economy, significant population growth and far-reaching progress in the areas of education, intellectual life, art, and especially toward the end of the period, evolution of the social and political system. The most populous capital city of [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw) replaced [Gdańsk](/wiki/Gdańsk) (Danzig) as the leading centre of commerce, and the role of the more prosperous townsmen increased.

### Age of partitions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) The [royal election](/wiki/Royal_elections_in_Poland) of 1764 resulted in the elevation of [Stanisław II August](/wiki/Stanisław_August_Poniatowski), a Polish aristocrat connected to major [magnate](/wiki/Magnate) [factions](/wiki/Czartoryski_family), to the monarchy. However, a one-time lover of Empress [Catherine II of Russia](/wiki/Catherine_II_of_Russia), the new king spent much of his reign torn between his desire to implement reforms necessary to save his nation, and his perceived necessity to remain in a political relationship with his Russian sponsor. This led to the formation of the 1768 [Bar Confederation](/wiki/Bar_Confederation), a *szlachta* rebellion directed against Russia and the Polish king that fought to preserve Poland's independence and the *szlachta****s traditional privileges.*** Attempts at reform provoked the union's neighbours, and in 1772 the [First Partition of the Commonwealth](/wiki/First_Partition_of_Poland) by Prussia, Russia and Austria took place; an act which the "[Partition Sejm](/wiki/Partition_Sejm)", under considerable duress, eventually "ratified" *fait accompli*.[[39]](#cite_note-39) Disregarding this loss, in 1773 the king established the [Commission of National Education](/wiki/Commission_of_National_Education), the first government education authority in Europe. [Corporal punishment](/wiki/Corporal_punishment) of children was officially prohibited in 1783.

[thumb|left|Enactment ceremony of the](/wiki/File:Wojniakowski_Passing_of_the_3rd_of_May_Constitution.jpg) [3 May Constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_May_3,_1791) inside the Senate Chamber at the [Warsaw Royal Castle](/wiki/Royal_Castle,_Warsaw), 1791

The [Great Sejm](/wiki/Great_Sejm) convened by Stanisław II August in 1788 successfully adopted the [3 May Constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_May_3,_1791), the first set of modern supreme national laws in Europe. However, this document, accused by detractors of harbouring revolutionary sympathies, generated strong opposition from the Commonwealth's nobles and conservatives as well as from Catherine II, who, determined to prevent the rebirth of a strong Commonwealth set about planning the final dismemberment of the Polish-Lithuanian state. Russia was aided in achieving its goal when the [Targowica Confederation](/wiki/Targowica_Confederation), an organisation of Polish nobles, appealed to the Empress for help. In May 1792, Russian forces crossed the Commonwealth's frontier, thus beginning the [Polish-Russian War](/wiki/Polish–Russian_War_of_1792).

The defensive war fought by the Poles ended prematurely when the King, convinced of the futility of resistance, capitulated and joined the Targowica Confederation. The Confederation then took over the government. Russia and Prussia, fearing the mere existence of a Polish state, arranged for, and in 1793 executed, the [Second Partition of the Commonwealth](/wiki/Second_Partition_of_Poland), which left the country deprived of so much territory that it was practically incapable of independent existence. Eventually, in 1795, following the failed [Kościuszko Uprising](/wiki/Kościuszko_Uprising), the Commonwealth was [partitioned one last time](/wiki/Third_Partition_of_Poland) by all three of its more powerful neighbours, and with this, effectively ceased to exist.[[40]](#cite_note-40)

### Congress Poland[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|right|300px|](/wiki/File:Partitions_of_Poland.png)[Partitions of Poland](/wiki/Partitions_of_Poland), carried out by the [Kingdom of Prussia](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Prussia), [Russian Empire](/wiki/Russian_Empire) and [Austrian Habsburg Empire](/wiki/Habsburg_Monarchy) in [1772](/wiki/First_Partition_of_Poland), [1793](/wiki/Second_Partition_of_Poland) and [1795](/wiki/Third_Partition_of_Poland)

Poles [rebelled several times against the partitioners](/wiki/List_of_wars_involving_Poland), particularly near the end of the 18th-century and the beginning of the 19th-century. An unsuccessful attempt at defending Poland's sovereignty took place in 1794 during the [Kościuszko Uprising](/wiki/Kościuszko_Uprising), where a popular and distinguished general [Tadeusz Kosciuszko](/wiki/Tadeusz_Kosciuszko), who had several years earlier served under [Washington](/wiki/George_Washington) in the [American Revolutionary War](/wiki/American_Revolutionary_War), led Polish insurgents against numerically superior Russian forces. Despite the victory at the [Battle of Racławice](/wiki/Battle_of_Racławice), his ultimate defeat ended Poland's independent existence [for 123 years](/wiki/Third_Partition_of_Poland).[[41]](#cite_note-41) In 1807, [Napoleon I of France](/wiki/Napoleon_I_of_France) temporarily recreated a Polish state as a satellite [Duchy of Warsaw](/wiki/Duchy_of_Warsaw), but after the failed [Napoleonic Wars](/wiki/Napoleonic_Wars), Poland was again split between the victorious powers at the [Congress of Vienna](/wiki/Congress_of_Vienna) of 1815.[[42]](#cite_note-42) The eastern part was ruled by the Russian [tsar](/wiki/Tsar) as a [Congress Kingdom](/wiki/Congress_Poland), which had a very [liberal constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_the_Kingdom_of_Poland). However, over time the Russian tsar reduced Polish freedoms, and Russia annexed the country in virtually all but name. Meanwhile, the Prussian-controlled territory of Poland came under increased Germanization. Thus, in the 19th-century, only Austrian-ruled [Galicia](/wiki/Galicia_(Central_Europe)), and particularly the [Free City of Kraków](/wiki/Free_City_of_Kraków), allowed free Polish cultural life to flourish.

[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Kościuszko_taking_an_oath_at_Kraków's_Market_Square.jpg)[Tadeusz Kościuszko](/wiki/Tadeusz_Kościuszko) takes the oath of loyalty to the Polish King in [Kraków](/wiki/Kraków), vowing to fight against [the military intervention](/wiki/Second_Partition_of_Poland) of the partitioning powers, 1794

Throughout the period of the partitions, political and cultural repression of the Polish nation led to the organisation of a number of uprisings against the authorities of the occupying Russian, Prussian and Austrian governments. Notable among these are the [November Uprising](/wiki/November_Uprising) of 1830 and [January Uprising](/wiki/January_Uprising) of 1863, both of which were attempts to free Poland from the rule of tsarist Russia. The November uprising began on 29 November 1830 in [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw) when, led by Lieutenant [Piotr Wysocki](/wiki/Piotr_Wysocki), young [non-commissioned officers](/wiki/Non-commissioned_officer) at the [Imperial Russian Army's](/wiki/Imperial_Russian_Army) [military academy](/wiki/Military_academy) in that city revolted. They were joined by large segments of Polish society, and together forced Warsaw's Russian garrison to withdraw north of the city.

Over the course of the next seven months, Polish forces successfully defeated the Russian armies of Field Marshal [Hans Karl von Diebitsch](/wiki/Hans_Karl_von_Diebitsch) and a number of other Russian commanders; however, finding themselves in a position unsupported by any other foreign powers, save distant France and the newborn United States, and with [Prussia](/wiki/Prussia) and [Austria](/wiki/Austria) refusing to allow the import of military supplies through their territories, the Poles accepted that the uprising was doomed to failure. Upon the surrender of Warsaw to General [Ivan Paskievich](/wiki/Ivan_Paskievich), many Polish troops, feeling they could not go on, withdrew into Germany and there laid down their arms. Poles would have to wait another 32 years for another opportunity to free their homeland.

[thumb|Capture of the](/wiki/File:Marcin_Zaleski,_Wzięcie_Arsenału.jpg) [Warsaw Arsenal](/wiki/Warsaw_Arsenal) by the Polish army during the [November Uprising](/wiki/November_Uprising), 29 November 1830

When in January 1863 a new Polish uprising against Russian rule began, it did so as a spontaneous protest by young Poles against [conscription](/wiki/Conscription) into the Imperial Russian Army. However, the insurrectionists, despite being joined by high-ranking Polish-Lithuanian officers and numerous politicians, were still severely outnumbered and lacking in foreign support. They were forced to resort to [guerrilla warfare](/wiki/Guerrilla_warfare) tactics and failed to win any major military victories. Afterwards no major uprising was witnessed in the Russian-controlled [Congress Poland](/wiki/Congress_Poland), and Poles resorted instead to fostering economic and cultural self-improvement.

Despite the political unrest experienced during the partitions, Poland did benefit from large-scale industrialisation and modernisation programs, instituted by the occupying powers, which helped it develop into a more economically coherent and viable entity. This was particularly true in the Greater Poland, Pomerania and Warmia annexed by Prussia (later becoming a part of the [German Empire](/wiki/German_Empire)); an area which eventually, thanks largely to the [Greater Poland Uprising](/wiki/Greater_Poland_Uprising_(1918–1919)), was reconstituted as a part of the [Second Polish Republic](/wiki/Second_Polish_Republic) and became one of its most productive regions.

### Reconstitution[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|left|](/wiki/File:Jozef_Pilsudski.jpg)[Chief of State](/wiki/Naczelnik_państwa) Marshal [Józef Piłsudski](/wiki/Józef_Piłsudski) was the nation's premiere statesman between 1918 until his death on 12 May 1935

During [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I), all the [Allies](/wiki/Allies_of_World_War_I) agreed on the reconstitution of Poland that United States President [Woodrow Wilson](/wiki/Woodrow_Wilson) proclaimed in Point 13 of his [Fourteen Points](/wiki/Fourteen_Points). A total of 2 million Polish troops fought with the armies of the three occupying powers, and 450,000 died. Shortly after the [armistice with Germany in November 1918](/wiki/Armistice_with_Germany_(Compiègne)), Poland regained its independence as the [Second Polish Republic](/wiki/Second_Polish_Republic) (*II Rzeczpospolita Polska*). It reaffirmed its independence after [a series of military conflicts](/wiki/List_of_wars_involving_Poland), the most notable being the [Polish–Soviet War](/wiki/Polish–Soviet_War) (1919–1921) when Poland inflicted a crushing defeat on the [Red Army](/wiki/Red_Army) at the [Battle of Warsaw](/wiki/Battle_of_Warsaw_(1920)), an event which is considered to have halted the advance of Communism into Europe and forced [Vladimir Lenin](/wiki/Vladimir_Lenin) to rethink his objective of achieving global socialism. The event is often referred to as the "Miracle at the Vistula".[[43]](#cite_note-43) [thumb|Map of Poland during the](/wiki/File:RzeczpospolitaII.png) [Interwar period](/wiki/Interwar_period), 1918-1939

During this period, Poland successfully managed to fuse the territories of the three former partitioning powers into a cohesive nation state. Railways were restructured to direct traffic towards [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw) instead of the former imperial capitals, a new network of national roads was gradually built up and a [major seaport](/wiki/Gdynia) was opened on the [Baltic](/wiki/Baltic_Sea) Coast, so as to allow Polish exports and imports to bypass the politically charged [Free City of Danzig](/wiki/Free_City_of_Danzig).

The inter-war period heralded in a new era of Polish politics. Whilst Polish political activists had faced heavy censorship in the decades up until the [First World War](/wiki/First_World_War), the country now found itself trying to establish a new political tradition. For this reason, many exiled Polish activists, such as [Ignacy Paderewski](/wiki/Ignacy_Jan_Paderewski) (who would later become Prime Minister) returned home to help; a significant number of them then went on to take key positions in the newly formed political and governmental structures. Tragedy struck in 1922 when [Gabriel Narutowicz](/wiki/Gabriel_Narutowicz), inaugural holder of the Presidency, was assassinated at the [Zachęta Gallery](/wiki/Zachęta) in Warsaw by painter and right-wing nationalist [Eligiusz Niewiadomski](/wiki/Eligiusz_Niewiadomski).[[44]](#cite_note-44) The 1926 [May Coup](/wiki/May_Coup_(Poland)) of [Józef Piłsudski](/wiki/Józef_Piłsudski) turned rule of the Second Polish Republic over to the [Sanacja](/wiki/Sanacja) movement. By the 1930s Poland had become increasingly authoritarian; a number of 'undesirable' political parties, such as the Polish Communists, had been banned and following Piłsudski's death, the regime, unable to appoint a new leader, began to show its inherent internal weaknesses and unwillingness to cooperate in any way with other political parties.

As result of the [Munich Agreement](/wiki/Munich_Agreement) in 1938, major European powers (Germany, France, Britain and Italy) awarded Poland the small 350 sq mi [Zaolzie Region](/wiki/Zaolzie) of Czechoslovakia. The area was a point of contention between the Polish and Czechoslovak governments in the past and the two countries [fought a brief seven day war over it in 1919](/wiki/Polish–Czechoslovak_War).

### World War II[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|Polish army's](/wiki/File:7TP-2.jpg) [7TP](/wiki/7TP) tanks during military maneuvers shortly before the [Invasion of Poland](/wiki/Invasion_of_Poland), 1939

The formal beginning of [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II) was marked by the [Nazi German](/wiki/Nazi_German) [invasion of Poland](/wiki/Invasion_of_Poland_(1939)) on 1 September 1939, followed by the [Soviet invasion of Poland](/wiki/Soviet_invasion_of_Poland) on 17 September in violation of the [Soviet–Polish Non-Aggression Pact](/wiki/Soviet–Polish_Non-Aggression_Pact). On 28 September 1939 [Warsaw capitulated](/wiki/Siege_of_Warsaw_(1939)). As agreed earlier in the [Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact](/wiki/Molotov–Ribbentrop_Pact), Poland was split into two occupied zones, [one subdivided by Nazi Germany](/wiki/Polish_areas_annexed_by_Nazi_Germany), while the other, including all of eastern [Kresy](/wiki/Kresy) fell under [the control of the Soviet Union](/wiki/Territories_of_Poland_annexed_by_the_Soviet_Union). In 1939–1941, the Soviets had deported hundreds of thousands of Poles out to the most distant parts of the Soviet Union. The Soviet [NKVD](/wiki/NKVD) secretly executed thousands of Polish prisoners of war (inter alia [Katyn massacre](/wiki/Katyn_massacre)) ahead of the [Operation Barbarossa](/wiki/Operation_Barbarossa).[[45]](#cite_note-45) German planners had in November 1939 called for "the complete destruction" of all [Poles](/wiki/Poles) and their fate, as well as many other [Slavs](/wiki/Slavs), was outlined in genocidal [*Generalplan Ost*](/wiki/Generalplan_Ost).[[46]](#cite_note-46) [thumb|left|Pilots of the](/wiki/File:Dywizjon_303_in_color.jpg) [303 *"Kościuszko"* Polish Fighter Squadron](/wiki/No._303_Polish_Fighter_Squadron) during the [Battle of Britain](/wiki/Battle_of_Britain), October 1940

During the war, Poland made the fourth-largest troop contribution to [the Allied](/wiki/Allies_of_World_War_II) war effort, after the [Soviets](/wiki/Soviet_Union), the British, and the Americans.[Template:Ref label](/wiki/Template:Ref_label) Polish troops fought under the command of both the [Polish Government in Exile](/wiki/Polish_Government_in_Exile) in the [west](/wiki/Polish_Armed_Forces_in_the_West) and under Soviet leadership in the [east](/wiki/Polish_Armed_Forces_in_the_East). The Polish expeditionary corps, which was controlled by the exiled pre-war government based in London, played an important role in the [Italian](/wiki/Italian_Campaign_(World_War_II)) and [North African Campaigns](/wiki/North_African_Campaign).[[47]](#cite_note-47)[[48]](#cite_note-48) They are particularly well remembered for their conduct at the [Battle of Monte Cassino](/wiki/Battle_of_Monte_Cassino), a conflict which culminated in the raising of a Polish flag over the ruins of the mountain-top abbey by the [12th Podolian Uhlans](/wiki/II_Corps_(Poland)). The Polish forces in the west were commanded by Lieutenant General [Władysław Anders](/wiki/Władysław_Anders), who had received his command from [Prime Minister](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Poland) of the [exiled government](/wiki/Polish_government-in-exile) [Władysław Sikorski](/wiki/Władysław_Sikorski). In the east, the Soviet-backed [Polish 1st Army](/wiki/First_Polish_Army_(1944-1945)) distinguished itself in the battles for [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw_Uprising) and [Berlin](/wiki/Battle_of_Berlin).[[49]](#cite_note-49) Polish servicemen were also active in the theatres of naval and air warfare; during the [Battle of Britain](/wiki/Battle_of_Britain) Polish squadrons such as the [No. 303 "Kościuszko" fighter squadron](/wiki/No._303_Polish_Fighter_Squadron)[[50]](#cite_note-50) achieved considerable success, and by the end of the war the [exiled Polish Air Forces](/wiki/Polish_Air_Forces_in_France_and_Great_Britain) could claim 769 confirmed kills. Meanwhile, the [Polish Navy](/wiki/Polish_Navy) was active in the protection of convoys in the [North Sea](/wiki/North_Sea) and Atlantic Ocean.[[51]](#cite_note-51) [thumb|upright|Grave of a](/wiki/File:Polish_Soldier's_Grave_Warsaw_1945.jpg) [Polish resistance fighter](/wiki/Polish_resistance_movement_in_World_War_II) killed during the [Warsaw Uprising](/wiki/Warsaw_Uprising). The battle lasted 63 days and resulted in the deaths of 200,000 civilians, 1944

In addition to the organised units of the 1st Army and the Forces in the Nazi-occupied Europe, the domestic underground resistance movement, the [Armia Krajowa](/wiki/Armia_Krajowa) (*Home Army*), fought against the German occupation. The [wartime resistance movement](/wiki/Polish_resistance_movement_in_World_War_II) in Poland was one of the three largest resistance movements of the entire war,[Template:Ref label](/wiki/Template:Ref_label) and encompassed an unusually broad range of clandestine activities, which essentially functioned as an [underground state](/wiki/Polish_Underground_State) complete with [degree-awarding universities](/wiki/Education_in_Poland_during_World_War_II) and [a court system](/wiki/Special_Courts).[[52]](#cite_note-52) The resistance was, however, largely loyal to the exiled government and generally resented the idea of a communist Poland; for this reason, in the summer of 1944 they initiated [Operation Tempest](/wiki/Operation_Tempest), of which the [Warsaw Uprising](/wiki/Warsaw_Uprising) that begun on 1 August 1944 was the best known operation.[[53]](#cite_note-53)[[54]](#cite_note-54) The objective of the uprising was to drive the German occupiers from the city and help with the larger fight against Germany and the [Axis powers](/wiki/Axis_powers). However, secondary motives for the uprising sought to see Warsaw liberated before the Soviets could reach the capital, so as to underscore Polish [sovereignty](/wiki/Sovereignty) by empowering the Polish Underground State before the Soviet-backed [Polish Committee of National Liberation](/wiki/Polish_Committee_of_National_Liberation) could assume control. However, a lack of available allied military aid and Stalin's reluctance to allow the 1st Army to help their fellow countrymen take the city, led to the uprising's failure and subsequent [planned destruction of the city](/wiki/Planned_destruction_of_Warsaw).

[thumb|left|Map of](/wiki/File:WW2-Holocaust-Poland.PNG) [the Holocaust in occupied Poland](/wiki/The_Holocaust_in_occupied_Poland) with deportation routes and massacre sites. Major [ghettos](/wiki/Jewish_ghettos_in_German-occupied_Poland) marked with [yellow stars](/wiki/Yellow_badge#Nazi_Europe). Nazi [extermination camps](/wiki/Extermination_camps) marked with white skulls in black squares. The [Curzon Line](/wiki/Curzon_Line) in 1941, between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union marked in red

During the war, German forces under direct order from [Adolf Hitler](/wiki/Adolf_Hitler) set up six major [extermination camps](/wiki/Extermination_camp), all of which operated in the heart of Poland. They included the notorious [Treblinka](/wiki/Treblinka_extermination_camp), [Majdanek](/wiki/Majdanek_concentration_camp) and [Auschwitz](/wiki/Auschwitz_concentration_camp) killing centers. This allowed the Germans to [transport the condemned Jews](/wiki/Holocaust_train) under the guise of resettlement from the Third Reich and across occupied Europe, and systematically murder them in the death camps set up in the [Polish areas annexed by Nazi Germany](/wiki/Polish_areas_annexed_by_Nazi_Germany). The Nazi crimes against the Polish nation claimed the lives of 2.9 million Polish Jews,[[55]](#cite_note-55) and 2.8 million ethnic Poles,[[56]](#cite_note-56) including Polish academics, doctors, lawyers, nobility, priests and numerous others. Since 3,5 million Jews lived in pre-war Poland, Jewish victims make up the largest percentage of all victims of the Nazis' extermination program. It is estimated that, of pre-war Poland's Jewry, approximately 90% were killed. Throughout the [occupation](/wiki/Occupation_of_Poland_(1939–1945)), many members of the Armia Krajowa, supported by the [Polish government in exile](/wiki/Polish_government_in_exile), and millions of ordinary Poles – at great risk to themselves and their families – [engaged in rescuing Jews from the Nazi Germans](/wiki/Rescue_of_Jews_by_Poles_during_the_Holocaust). Grouped by nationality, Poles represent the largest number of people who rescued Jews during the Holocaust. To date, 6,620 Poles have been awarded the title of [*Righteous Among the Nations*](/wiki/Polish_Righteous_Among_the_Nations) by the State of [Israel](/wiki/Israel)–more than any other nation.[[57]](#cite_note-57) Some estimates put the number of Poles involved in rescue efforts at up to 3 million, and credit Poles with sheltering up to 450,000 Jews.

At the war's conclusion in 1945, Poland's borders [were shifted westwards](/wiki/Territorial_changes_of_Poland_immediately_after_World_War_II), resulting in considerable territorial losses. Most of the Polish inhabitants of [Kresy](/wiki/Kresy) [were expelled](/wiki/Polish_population_transfers_(1944–46)) along the [Curzon Line](/wiki/Curzon_Line) in accordance with Stalin's agreements.[[58]](#cite_note-58) The western border was moved to the [Oder-Neisse line](/wiki/Oder-Neisse_line). As a result, Poland's territory was reduced by 20%, or [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). The shift forced the migration of [millions of other people](/wiki/World_War_II_evacuation_and_expulsion), most of whom were Poles, Germans, Ukrainians, and Jews.[[59]](#cite_note-59) [Of all the countries involved](/wiki/World_War_II_casualties) in the war, Poland [lost the highest percentage of its citizens](/wiki/Occupation_of_Poland_(1939–1945)): over 6 million perished – nearly one-fifth of Poland's population — [half of them](/wiki/Holocaust_in_Poland) Polish Jews.[[7]](#cite_note-7)[[60]](#cite_note-60)[[61]](#cite_note-61)<ref name=expatica>AFP/Expatica, [*Polish experts lower nation's WWII death toll*](http://www.expatica.com/de/news/german-news/Polish-experts-lower-nation_s-WWII-death-toll--_55843.html), Expatica.com, 30 August 2009</ref> Over 90% of deaths were non-military in nature. Population numbers did not recover until the 1970s.

### Postwar communism[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|*At*](/wiki/File:Solidarity_poster_1989.jpg) [*High Noon*](/wiki/High_Noon)*, 4 June 1989* – political poster featuring [Gary Cooper](/wiki/Gary_Cooper) to encourage votes for the [Solidarity](/wiki/Solidarity_(Polish_trade_union)) party in the [1989 elections](/wiki/Contract_Sejm)

At the insistence of [Joseph Stalin](/wiki/Joseph_Stalin), the [Yalta Conference](/wiki/Yalta_Conference) sanctioned the formation of a new provisional pro-Communist coalition government in Moscow, which ignored the [Polish government-in-exile](/wiki/Polish_government-in-exile) based in London; a move which angered many Poles who considered it a [betrayal](/wiki/Yalta_betrayal) by the Allies. In 1944, Stalin had made guarantees to [Churchill](/wiki/Winston_Churchill) and [Roosevelt](/wiki/Franklin_D._Roosevelt) that he would maintain Poland's sovereignty and allow democratic elections to take place. However, upon achieving victory in 1945, the elections organized by the occupying Soviet authorities were falsified and were used to provide a veneer of 'legitimacy' for Soviet hegemony over Polish affairs. The Soviet Union instituted a new [communist](/wiki/Communist_state) government in Poland, analogous to much of the rest of the [Eastern Bloc](/wiki/Eastern_Bloc). [As elsewhere in Communist Europe](/wiki/Anti-Communism_in_the_Communist_Bloc) the Soviet occupation of Poland met with [armed resistance](/wiki/Cursed_soldiers) from the outset which continued into the fifties.

Despite widespread objections, the new Polish government accepted the Soviet annexation of the pre-war eastern regions of Poland[[62]](#cite_note-62) (in particular the cities of [Wilno](/wiki/Wilno) and [Lwów](/wiki/Lwów)) and agreed to the permanent garrisoning of [Red Army](/wiki/Red_Army) units on Poland's territory. Military alignment within the [Warsaw Pact](/wiki/Warsaw_Pact) throughout the [Cold War](/wiki/Cold_War) came about as a direct result of this change in Poland's political culture and in the European scene came to characterise the full-fledged integration of Poland into the brotherhood of communist nations.

The [People's Republic of Poland](/wiki/People's_Republic_of_Poland) (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*) [was officially proclaimed in 1952](/wiki/Constitution_of_the_People's_Republic_of_Poland). In 1956 after the death of [Bolesław Bierut](/wiki/Bolesław_Bierut), the régime of [Władysław Gomułka](/wiki/Władysław_Gomułka) became temporarily more liberal, freeing many people from prison and expanding some personal freedoms. A similar situation repeated itself in the 1970s under [Edward Gierek](/wiki/Edward_Gierek), but most of the time persecution of [anti-communist opposition](/wiki/Anti-communist_resistance_in_Poland) groups persisted. Despite this, Poland was at the time considered to be one of the least oppressive states of the [Soviet Bloc](/wiki/Soviet_Bloc).[[63]](#cite_note-63) Labour turmoil in 1980 led to the formation of the independent trade union "[Solidarity](/wiki/Solidarity_(Polish_trade_union))" ("*Solidarność*"), which over time became a political force. Despite persecution and imposition of [martial law in 1981](/wiki/Martial_law_in_Poland), it eroded the dominance of the [Polish United Workers' Party](/wiki/Polish_United_Workers'_Party) and by 1989 had triumphed in Poland's first [partially free and democratic parliamentary elections](/wiki/Contract_Sejm) since the end of the Second World War. [Lech Wałęsa](/wiki/Lech_Wałęsa), a Solidarity candidate, eventually [won the presidency in 1990](/wiki/Polish_presidential_election,_1990). The Solidarity movement heralded the [collapse of communist regimes and parties across Europe](/wiki/Revolutions_of_1989).

### Present-day[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|Flags of Poland and the](/wiki/File:EU_and_PL_flags.jpg) [European Union](/wiki/European_Union) — the country became a member of the European community of nations on 1 May 2004 A [shock therapy](/wiki/Shock_therapy_(economics)) programme, initiated by [Leszek Balcerowicz](/wiki/Leszek_Balcerowicz) in the early 1990s enabled the country to transform its socialist-style planned economy into a [market economy](/wiki/Market_economy). As with other post-communist countries, Poland suffered slumps in social and economic standards,[[64]](#cite_note-64) but it became the first post-communist country to reach its pre-1989 GDP levels, which it achieved by 1995 largely thanks to its booming economy.[[65]](#cite_note-65)[[66]](#cite_note-66) Most visibly, there were numerous improvements in human rights, such as [freedom of speech](/wiki/Freedom_of_speech), [internet freedom](/wiki/Internet_censorship_by_country) (no censorship), civil liberties (1st class) and political rights (1st class), as ranked by [Freedom House](/wiki/Freedom_House) non-governmental organization. In 1991, Poland became a member of the [Visegrád Group](/wiki/Visegrád_Group) and joined the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization](/wiki/NATO) (NATO) alliance in 1999 along with the [Czech Republic](/wiki/Czech_Republic), [Slovakia](/wiki/Slovakia) and [Hungary](/wiki/Hungary). Poles then voted to join the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union) in [a referendum](/wiki/Referendums_in_Poland) in June 2003, with Poland becoming a full member on 1 May 2004. Poland joined the [Schengen Area](/wiki/Schengen_Area) in 2007, as a result of which, [the country's borders](/wiki/Borders_of_Poland) with other member states of the European Union have been dismantled, allowing for [full freedom of movement](/wiki/Freedom_of_movement#European_Union) within most of the EU.[[67]](#cite_note-67) In contrast to this, a section of Poland's eastern border now comprises the external EU border with [Belarus](/wiki/Belarus), Russia and Ukraine. That border has become increasingly well protected, and has led in part to the coining of the phrase ['Fortress Europe'](/wiki/Fortress_Europe#Modern_times), in reference to the seeming 'impossibility' of gaining entry to the EU for citizens of the [former Soviet Union](/wiki/Former_Soviet_Union).

[thumb|Candles and flowers on the](/wiki/File:Warsaw_National_Tragedy_2010-04-10_(4).jpg) [Royal Route, Warsaw](/wiki/Royal_Route,_Warsaw) following the [death of Poland's top government officials](/wiki/2010_Polish_Air_Force_Tu-154_crash) including [President](/wiki/Lech_Kaczyński) in a plane crash over Smolensk in Russia, 10 April 2010

In an effort to strengthen military cooperation with its neighbors, Poland set up the [Visegrád Battlegroup](/wiki/Visegrád_Battlegroup) with [Hungary](/wiki/Hungary), [Czech Republic](/wiki/Czech_Republic) and [Slovakia](/wiki/Slovakia), with a total of 3,000 troops ready for deployment. Also, in the east Poland created the [LITPOLUKRBRIG](/wiki/Lithuanian–Polish–Ukrainian_Brigade) battle groups with [Lithuania](/wiki/Lithuania) and [Ukraine](/wiki/Ukraine). These battle groups will operate outside of NATO and within the European defense initiative framework.[[68]](#cite_note-68) On 10 April 2010, the President of the Republic of Poland, [Lech Kaczyński](/wiki/Lech_Kaczyński), along with 89 other high-ranking Polish officials [died in a plane crash](/wiki/2010_Polish_Air_Force_Tu-154_crash) near [Smolensk](/wiki/Smolensk), [Russia](/wiki/Russia). The president's party were on their way to attend an annual service of commemoration for the victims of the [Katyń massacre](/wiki/Katyn_massacre) when the tragedy took place.

In 2011, the [Presidency of the Council of the European Union](/wiki/Presidency_of_the_Council_of_the_European_Union) responsible for the functioning of the [Council](/wiki/Council_of_the_European_Union) was awarded to Poland. The same year [parliamentary elections](/wiki/Polish_parliamentary_election,_2011) took place to both [the Senate](/wiki/Senate_of_Poland) and the Sejm. They were won by the ruling Civic Platform. Poland joined [European Space Agency](/wiki/European_Space_Agency) in 2012, as well as organised the [UEFA Euro 2012](/wiki/UEFA_Euro_2012) (along with Ukraine). In 2013, Poland also became a member of the [Development Assistance Committee](/wiki/Development_Assistance_Committee). In 2014, the [Prime Minister of Poland](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Poland), [Donald Tusk](/wiki/Donald_Tusk), was chosen to be [President of the European Council](/wiki/President_of_the_European_Council).

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Poland_topo.jpg)[Topographic](/wiki/Topography) map of Poland

Poland's territory extends across several geographical regions, between latitudes [49°](/wiki/49th_parallel_north) and [55° N](/wiki/55th_parallel_north), and longitudes [14°](/wiki/14th_meridian_east) and [25° E](/wiki/25th_meridian_east). In the north-west is the Baltic seacoast, which extends from the [Bay of Pomerania](/wiki/Bay_of_Pomerania) to the [Gulf of Gdańsk](/wiki/Gdańsk_Bay). This coast is marked by several [spits](/wiki/Spit_(landform)), coastal lakes (former bays that have been cut off from the sea), and dunes. The largely straight coastline is indented by the [Szczecin Lagoon](/wiki/Szczecin_Lagoon), the [Bay of Puck](/wiki/Bay_of_Puck), and the [Vistula Lagoon](/wiki/Vistula_Lagoon). The centre and parts of the north lie within the [North European Plain](/wiki/North_European_Plain).

Rising above these lowlands is a geographical region comprising the four hilly districts of [moraines](/wiki/Moraine) and [moraine-dammed lakes](/wiki/Moraine-dammed_lake) formed during and after the [Pleistocene ice age](/wiki/Quaternary_glaciation). These lake districts are the [Pomeranian](/wiki/Pomerania) Lake District, the Greater Polish Lake District, the [Kashubian](/wiki/Kashubia) Lake District, and the [Masurian Lake District](/wiki/Masurian_Lake_District). The Masurian Lake District is the largest of the four and covers much of north-eastern Poland. The lake districts form part of the Baltic Ridge, a series of moraine belts along the southern shore of the [Baltic Sea](/wiki/Baltic_Sea).

South of the [Northern European Lowlands](/wiki/Northern_European_Lowlands) lie the regions of [Lusatia](/wiki/Lusatia), [Silesia](/wiki/Silesia) and [Masovia](/wiki/Masovia), which are marked by broad ice-age river valleys. Farther south lies the Polish mountain region, including the [Sudetes](/wiki/Sudetes), the [Kraków-Częstochowa Upland](/wiki/Kraków-Częstochowa_Upland), the [Świętokrzyskie Mountains](/wiki/Świętokrzyskie_Mountains), and the [Carpathian Mountains](/wiki/Carpathian_Mountains), including the [Beskids](/wiki/Beskids). The highest part of the Carpathians is the [Tatra Mountains](/wiki/Tatra_Mountains), along Poland's southern border.

### Geology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Sudety_Wschodnie_mit.JPG)[Sudetes Mountains](/wiki/Sudetes) in the [Lower Silesia](/wiki/Lower_Silesia) region

The geological structure of Poland has been shaped by the [continental collision](/wiki/Continental_collision) of [Europe](/wiki/Europe) and [Africa](/wiki/Africa) over the past 60 million years and, more recently, by the [Quaternary](/wiki/Quaternary) [glaciations](/wiki/Glacier) of northern Europe. Both processes shaped the [Sudetes](/wiki/Sudetes) and the [Carpathian Mountains](/wiki/Carpathian_Mountains). The moraine landscape of northern Poland contains soils made up mostly of sand or [loam](/wiki/Loam), while the ice age [river valleys](/wiki/River_valley) of the south often contain [loess](/wiki/Loess). The [Kraków-Częstochowa Upland](/wiki/Kraków-Częstochowa_Upland), the [Pieniny](/wiki/Pieniny), and the [Western Tatras](/wiki/Western_Tatras) consist of [limestone](/wiki/Limestone), while the [High Tatras](/wiki/High_Tatras), the [Beskids](/wiki/Beskids), and the [Karkonosze](/wiki/Karkonosze) are made up mainly of [granite](/wiki/Granite) and [basalts](/wiki/Basalt). The [Polish Jura Chain](/wiki/Polish_Jura_Chain) is one of the oldest [mountain ranges](/wiki/Mountain_range) on earth.

[thumb|](/wiki/File:Giewont_and_Wielka_Turnia.jpg)[Tatra Mountains](/wiki/Tatra_Mountains) in southern Poland average 2,000 metres (6,600 ft) in elevation

Poland has 70 mountains over [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in elevation, all in the [Tatras](/wiki/Tatras). The Polish Tatras, which consist of the High Tatras and the Western Tatras, is the highest mountain group of Poland and of the entire Carpathian range. In the High Tatras lies Poland's highest point, the north-western [summit](/wiki/Summit) of [Rysy](/wiki/Rysy), [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in elevation. At its foot lies the mountain lakes of [Czarny Staw pod Rysami](/wiki/Czarny_Staw_pod_Rysami) (Black Lake below Mount Rysy), and [Morskie Oko](/wiki/Morskie_Oko) (the Marine Eye).[[69]](#cite_note-69) The second highest mountain group in Poland is the [Beskids](/wiki/Beskids), whose highest peak is [Babia Góra](/wiki/Babia_Góra), at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). The next highest mountain groups is the [Karkonosze](/wiki/Krkonoše) in the [Sudetes](/wiki/Sudetes), whose highest point is [Śnieżka](/wiki/Sněžka), at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert); [Śnieżnik Mountains](/wiki/Śnieżnik_Mountains) whose highest point is [Śnieżnik](/wiki/Králický_Sněžník), at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).

Tourists also frequent the [Bieszczady Mountains](/wiki/Bieszczady_Mountains) in the far southeast of Poland, whose highest point in Poland is [Tarnica](/wiki/Tarnica), with an elevation of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), [Gorce Mountains](/wiki/Gorce_Mountains) in [Gorce National Park](/wiki/Gorce_National_Park), whose highest point is [Turbacz](/wiki/Turbacz), with elevations [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), and the [Pieniny](/wiki/Pieniny) in [Pieniny National Park](/wiki/Pieniny_National_Park_(Poland)), whose highest point is Wysokie Skałki (Wysoka), with elevations [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). The lowest point in Poland – at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) below sea level – is at Raczki Elbląskie, near [Elbląg](/wiki/Elbląg) in the Vistula Delta.

[thumb|left|Shifting sand dunes in](/wiki/File:Słowiński_Park_Narodowy_3.jpg) [Słowiński National Park](/wiki/Słowiński_National_Park) located in northern Poland on the [Baltic Sea](/wiki/Baltic_Sea) coast. Driven by wind, the dunes slowly move at an annual rate of 3 to 10 metres (9.8 to 32.8 ft) per year

The only [desert](/wiki/Desert) located in Poland stretches over the [Zagłębie Dąbrowskie](/wiki/Zagłębie_Dąbrowskie) (the Coal Fields of [Dąbrowa](/wiki/Dąbrowa_Górnicza)) region. It is called the [Błędów Desert](/wiki/Błędów_Desert), located in the [Silesian Voivodeship](/wiki/Silesian_Voivodeship) in southern Poland. It has a total area of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). It is one of only five natural [deserts in Europe](/wiki/List_of_deserts#Europe). But also, it is the warmest desert that appears at this [latitude](/wiki/Latitude).

The Baltic Sea activity in [Słowiński National Park](/wiki/Słowiński_National_Park) created [sand dunes](/wiki/Sand_dunes) which in the course of time separated the bay from the sea creating two lakes. As waves and wind carry sand inland the dunes slowly move, at a rate of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) meters per year. Some dunes reach the height of up to [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). The highest peak of the park is Rowokol ([Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) [above sea level](/wiki/Above_mean_sea_level)).

### Waters[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|A view of the](/wiki/File:Sandomierz_(js).jpg) [Vistula River](/wiki/Vistula_River) near the [Royal Castle](/wiki/Sandomierz_Castle) in [Sandomierz](/wiki/Sandomierz). The river is the longest in Poland, flowing the entire length of the country for 1,047 kilometres (651 mi) from south to north

The longest rivers are the [Vistula](/wiki/Vistula_River) ([Template:Lang-pl](/wiki/Template:Lang-pl)), [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) long; the [Oder](/wiki/Oder_River) ([Template:Lang-pl](/wiki/Template:Lang-pl)) which forms part of Poland's western border, [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) long; its tributary, the [Warta](/wiki/Warta), [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) long; and the [Bug](/wiki/Bug_River), a tributary of the Vistula, [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) long. The Vistula and the Oder flow into the Baltic Sea, as do numerous smaller rivers in Pomerania.

The [Łyna](/wiki/Łyna_River) and the [Angrapa](/wiki/Angrapa_River) flow by way of the [Pregolya](/wiki/Pregolya) to the Baltic, and the [Czarna Hańcza](/wiki/Czarna_Hańcza) flows into the Baltic through the [Neman](/wiki/Neman_River). While the great majority of Poland's rivers drain into the Baltic Sea, Poland's Beskids are the source of some of the upper tributaries of the [Orava](/wiki/Orava_River), which flows via the [Váh](/wiki/Váh) and the [Danube](/wiki/Danube) to the [Black Sea](/wiki/Black_Sea). The eastern Beskids are also the source of some streams that drain through the [Dniester](/wiki/Dniester) to the Black Sea.

Poland's rivers have been used since early times for navigation. The [Vikings](/wiki/Viking), for example, traveled up the Vistula and the Oder in their [longships](/wiki/Longship). In the Middle Ages and in early modern times, when the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was the breadbasket of Europe;[[70]](#cite_note-70) the shipment of grain and other agricultural products down the Vistula toward [Gdańsk](/wiki/Gdańsk) and onward to other parts of Europe took on great importance.[[70]](#cite_note-70) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Łeba_near_Łebsko_02.jpg)[Łebsko Lake](/wiki/Łebsko_Lake) is a coastal freshwater [lagoon](/wiki/Lagoon) located in the [Pomerania](/wiki/Pomerania) region

With almost ten thousand closed bodies of water covering more than [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) each, Poland has one of the highest numbers of lakes in the world. In Europe, only [Finland](/wiki/Finland) has a greater density of lakes.[[71]](#cite_note-71) The largest lakes, covering more than [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), are [Lake Śniardwy](/wiki/Śniardwy) and [Lake Mamry](/wiki/Lake_Mamry) in [Masuria](/wiki/Masuria), and [Lake Łebsko](/wiki/Łebsko_Lake) and [Lake Drawsko](/wiki/Drawsko_Lake) in [Pomerania](/wiki/Pomerania).

In addition to the lake districts in the north (in Masuria, Pomerania, [Kashubia](/wiki/Kashubians), Lubuskie, and [Greater Poland](/wiki/Greater_Poland)), there is also a large number of mountain lakes in the Tatras, of which the Morskie Oko is the largest in area. The lake with the greatest depth—of more than [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)—is [Lake Hańcza](/wiki/Hańcza) in the Wigry Lake District, east of Masuria in [Podlaskie Voivodeship](/wiki/Podlaskie_Voivodeship).

[thumb|right|](/wiki/File:Olecko_Jezioro_Oleckie_Wielkie.jpg)[Masurian Lake District](/wiki/Masurian_Lake_District) located in the [Masuria](/wiki/Masuria) region of Poland contains more than 2,000 lakes

Among the first lakes whose shores were settled are those in the Greater Polish Lake District. The [stilt house](/wiki/Stilt_house) settlement of [Biskupin](/wiki/Biskupin), occupied by more than one thousand residents, was founded before the 7th century BC by people of the [Lusatian culture](/wiki/Lusatian_culture).

Lakes have always played an important role in Polish history and continue to be of great importance to today's modern Polish society. The ancestors of today's Poles, the [Polanie](/wiki/Polans_(western)), built their first fortresses on islands in these lakes. The legendary Prince [Popiel](/wiki/Popiel) ruled from [Kruszwica](/wiki/Kruszwica) tower erected on the [Lake Gopło](/wiki/Gopło).[[72]](#cite_note-72) The first historically documented ruler of Poland, Duke [Mieszko I](/wiki/Mieszko_I_of_Poland), had his palace on an island in the Warta River in [Poznań](/wiki/Poznań). Nowadays the Polish lakes provide a location for the pursuit of water sports such as [yachting](/wiki/Yachting) and [wind-surfing](/wiki/Wind-surfing).

The Polish Baltic coast is approximately [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) long and extends from [Świnoujście](/wiki/Świnoujście) on the islands of [Usedom](/wiki/Usedom) and [Wolin](/wiki/Wolin) in the west to [Krynica Morska](/wiki/Krynica_Morska) on the [Vistula Spit](/wiki/Vistula_Spit) in the east. For the most part, Poland has a smooth coastline, which has been shaped by the continual movement of sand by currents and winds. This continual [erosion](/wiki/Erosion) and [deposition](/wiki/Deposition_(geology)) has formed cliffs, dunes, and spits, many of which have migrated landwards to close off former lagoons, such as Łebsko Lake in Słowiński National Park.

[thumb|left|Polish](/wiki/File:Dębki_1a.jpg) [Baltic Sea](/wiki/Baltic_Sea) coast is approximately 528 kilometres (328 mi) long and extends from [Usedom](/wiki/Usedom) island in the west to [Krynica Morska](/wiki/Krynica_Morska) in the east

Prior to the end of the [Second World War](/wiki/Second_World_War) and subsequent [change in national borders](/wiki/Territorial_changes_of_Poland_immediately_after_World_War_II), Poland had only a very small coastline; this was situated at the end of the '[Polish Corridor'](/wiki/Polish_Corridor), the only internationally recognised Polish territory which afforded the country access to the sea. However, after World War II, the redrawing of Poland's borders and resulting 'shift' of the country's borders left it with an expanded coastline, thus allowing for far greater access to the sea than was ever previously possible. The significance of this event, and importance of it to Poland's future as a major industrialised nation, was alluded to by the 1945 [Wedding to the Sea](/wiki/Poland's_Wedding_to_the_Sea).

The largest spits are [Hel Peninsula](/wiki/Hel_Peninsula) and the [Vistula Spit](/wiki/Vistula_Spit). The largest Polish Baltic island is [Wolin](/wiki/Wolin). The largest sea [harbours](/wiki/Harbour) are [Szczecin](/wiki/Port_of_Szczecin), [Świnoujście](/wiki/Port_of_Świnoujście), [Gdańsk](/wiki/Port_of_Gdańsk), [Gdynia](/wiki/Port_of_Gdynia), [Police](/wiki/Port_of_Police) and [Kołobrzeg](/wiki/Port_of_Kołobrzeg). The main coastal resorts are [Świnoujście](/wiki/Świnoujście), [Międzyzdroje](/wiki/Międzyzdroje), [Kołobrzeg](/wiki/Kołobrzeg), [Łeba](/wiki/Łeba), [Sopot](/wiki/Sopot), [Władysławowo](/wiki/Władysławowo) and the Hel Peninsula.

### Land use[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[thumb|](/wiki/File:2014_Pole_uprawne_w_Raszkowie.jpg)[Rye](/wiki/Rye) fields in [Greater Poland](/wiki/Greater_Poland)

Poland is the fourth most forested country in Europe. Forests cover about 30.5% of Poland's land area based on international standards.[[73]](#cite_note-73) Its overall percentage is still increasing. [Forests of Poland](/wiki/Forests_of_Poland) are managed by the national program of reforestation (KPZL), aiming at an increase of forest-cover to 33% in 2050. The richness of Polish forest (per SoEF 2011 statistics) is more than twice as high as European average (with Germany and France at the top), containing 2.304 billion cubic metres of trees.[[73]](#cite_note-73) The largest forest complex in Poland is [Lower Silesian Wilderness](/wiki/Lower_Silesian_Wilderness).

More than 1% of Poland's territory, [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), is protected within 23 [Polish national parks](/wiki/List_of_national_parks_of_Poland). Three more national parks are projected for [Masuria](/wiki/Masuria), the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland, and the eastern [Beskids](/wiki/Beskids). In addition, [wetlands](/wiki/Wetland) along lakes and rivers in central Poland are legally protected, as are coastal areas in the north. There are over 120 areas designated as [landscape parks](/wiki/Landscape_Park_(Poland)), along with numerous [nature reserves](/wiki/Nature_reserve) and other [protected areas](/wiki/Protected_areas_of_Poland) (e.g. [Natura 2000](/wiki/Natura_2000)).

Since Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, Polish agriculture has performed extremely well and the country has over two million private farms.[[74]](#cite_note-74)[[75]](#cite_note-75) It is the leading producer in Europe of potatoes and [rye](/wiki/Rye) (world's second largest in 1989) the world's largest producer of [triticale](/wiki/Triticale),[[76]](#cite_note-76) and one of the more important producers of barley, oats, [sugar beets](/wiki/Sugar_beets), flax, and fruits. Poland is the European Union's fourth largest supplier of pork after Germany, Spain and France.[[77]](#cite_note-77)

### Biodiversity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Wisent.jpg)[Białowieża Forest](/wiki/Białowieża_Forest), an ancient woodland in eastern Poland, is now home to 800 wild [wisent](/wiki/Wisent)

[Phytogeographically](/wiki/Phytogeography), Poland belongs to the Central European province of the [Circumboreal Region](/wiki/Circumboreal_Region) within the [Boreal Kingdom](/wiki/Boreal_Kingdom). According to the [World Wide Fund for Nature](/wiki/World_Wide_Fund_for_Nature), the territory of [Poland belongs to three Palearctic Ecoregions](/wiki/Ecoregions_in_Poland) of the continental forest spanning Central and Northern European [temperate broadleaf and mixed forest](/wiki/Temperate_broadleaf_and_mixed_forest) ecoregions as well as the Carpathian [montane](/wiki/Montane) conifer forest.

Many animals that have since died out in other parts of Europe still survive in Poland, such as the [wisent](/wiki/Wisent) in the [ancient woodland](/wiki/Ancient_woodland) of the [Białowieża Forest](/wiki/Białowieża_Forest) and in [Podlaskie](/wiki/Podlaskie). Other such species include the [brown bear](/wiki/Brown_bear) in [Białowieża](/wiki/Białowieża), in the Tatras, and in the Beskids, the [gray wolf](/wiki/Gray_wolf) and the [Eurasian lynx](/wiki/Eurasian_lynx) in various forests, the [moose](/wiki/Moose) in northern Poland, and the [beaver](/wiki/Beaver) in Masuria, Pomerania, and Podlaskie.

In the forests, one also encounters game animals, such as [red deer](/wiki/Red_deer), [roe deer](/wiki/Roe_deer) and [wild boars](/wiki/Wild_boar). In eastern Poland there are a number of ancient woodlands, like [Białowieża forest](/wiki/Białowieża_forest), that have never been cleared or have been disturbed much by people. There are also large forested areas in the mountains, Masuria, Pomerania, [Lubusz Land](/wiki/Lubusz_Land) and [Lower Silesia](/wiki/Lower_Silesia).

[thumb|A family of](/wiki/File:WhiteStorkFamily.jpg) [white storks](/wiki/White_stork). Poland is host to the largest white stork population in Europe[[78]](#cite_note-78)

Poland is the most important breeding ground for a variety of European [migratory birds](/wiki/Migratory_birds).[[79]](#cite_note-79) Out of all of the migratory birds who come to Europe for the summer, one quarter of the global population of [white storks](/wiki/White_stork) (40,000 breeding pairs) live in Poland,[[80]](#cite_note-80) particularly in the lake districts and the wetlands along the [Biebrza](/wiki/Biebrza), the [Narew](/wiki/Narew), and the [Warta](/wiki/Warta), which are part of nature reserves or national parks.

### Climate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

The climate is mostly [temperate](/wiki/Temperateness) throughout the country. The climate is [oceanic](/wiki/Oceanic_climate) in the north and west and becomes gradually warmer and [continental](/wiki/Continental_climate) towards the south and east. Summers are generally warm, with average temperatures between [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) depending on a region. Winters are rather cold, with average temperatures around [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in the northwest and [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in the northeast. [Precipitation](/wiki/Precipitation_(meteorology)) falls throughout the year, although, especially in the east; winter is drier than summer.[[81]](#cite_note-81) The warmest region in Poland is [Lower Silesia](/wiki/Lower_Silesian_Voivodeship) located in south-western Poland where temperatures in the summer average between [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) but can go as high as [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) on some days in the warmest month of July and August. The warmest cities in Poland are [Tarnów](/wiki/Tarnów), which is situated in [Lesser Poland](/wiki/Lesser_Poland_Voivodeship) and [Wrocław](/wiki/Wrocław), which is located in Lower Silesia. The average temperatures in Wrocław are [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in the summer and [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in the winter, but [Tarnów](/wiki/Tarnów) has the longest summer in all of Poland, which lasts for 115 days, from mid-May to mid-September. The coldest region of Poland is in the northeast in the [Podlaskie Voivodeship](/wiki/Podlaskie_Voivodeship) near the border of [Belarus](/wiki/Belarus) and [Lithuania](/wiki/Lithuania). Usually the coldest city is [Suwałki](/wiki/Suwałki). The climate is affected by cold fronts which come from [Scandinavia](/wiki/Scandinavia) and [Siberia](/wiki/Siberia). The average temperature in the winter in Podlaskie ranges from [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Average daily maximum and minimum temperatures for the six largest cities in Poland[[82]](#cite_note-82) | | | | |
| **Location** | **July (°C)** | **July (°F)** | **January (°C)** | **January (°F)** |
| [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw) | 23/13 | 74/55 | 0/−5 | 32/23 |
| [Kraków](/wiki/Kraków) | 24/13 | 75/56 | 1/−5 | 34/23 |
| [Łódź](/wiki/Łódź) | 24/14 | 75/57 | 0/−5 | 33/25 |
| [Wrocław](/wiki/Wrocław) | 25/13 | 77/55 | 3/−4 | 37/25 |
| [Poznań](/wiki/Poznań) | 24/15 | 76/60 | 2/–4 | 36/23 |
| [Gdańsk/Gdynia](/wiki/Tricity,_Poland) | 22/15 | 73/58 | 2/−3 | 35/26 |

## Politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|left|](/wiki/File:Andrzej_Duda_portret.JPG)[President of the Republic of Poland](/wiki/President_of_the_Republic_of_Poland), [Andrzej Duda](/wiki/Andrzej_Duda)

Poland is a [representative democracy](/wiki/Representative_democracy), with a [president](/wiki/President_of_the_Republic_of_Poland) as a [head of state](/wiki/Head_of_state), whose current [constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_the_Republic_of_Poland) dates from 1997. Poland ranks in the top 20 percent of the most peaceful countries in the world, according to the [Global Peace Index](/wiki/Global_Peace_Index). The government structure centers on the [Council of Ministers](/wiki/Council_of_Ministers_of_the_Republic_of_Poland), led by a [prime minister](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_the_Republic_of_Poland). The president appoints the cabinet according to the proposals of the prime minister, typically from the majority coalition in the [Sejm](/wiki/Sejm_of_the_Republic_of_Poland). The president is elected by popular vote every five years. The president is [Andrzej Duda](/wiki/Andrzej_Duda) and the current prime minister is [Beata Szydło](/wiki/Beata_Szydło).

Polish voters elect a [bicameral](/wiki/Bicameralism) parliament consisting of a 460-member lower house (Sejm) and a 100-member Senate ([Senat](/wiki/Senate_of_the_Republic_of_Poland)). The Sejm is elected under [proportional representation](/wiki/Proportional_representation) according to the [d'Hondt method](/wiki/D'Hondt_method), a method similar to that used in many parliamentary political systems. The Senat, on the other hand, is elected under the [first-past-the-post voting](/wiki/First-past-the-post_voting) method, with one senator being returned from each of the 100 constituencies.

[thumb|](/wiki/File:Zgromadzenie_Narodowe_4_czerwca_2014_Kancelaria_Senatu_01.JPG)[Sejm](/wiki/Sejm) is the [lower house](/wiki/Lower_house) of the Polish [parliament](/wiki/Parliament)

With the exception of ethnic minority parties, only candidates of [political parties](/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_Poland) receiving at least 5% of the total national vote can enter the Sejm. When sitting in joint session, members of the Sejm and Senat form the [National Assembly](/wiki/National_Assembly_of_the_Republic_of_Poland) (the *Zgromadzenie Narodowe*). The National Assembly is formed on three occasions: when a new President takes the [oath of office](/wiki/Oath_of_office); when an indictment against the President of the Republic is brought to the State Tribunal (*Trybunał Stanu*); and when a president's permanent incapacity to exercise his duties due to the state of his health is declared. To date only the first instance has occurred.

The [judicial branch](/wiki/Judiciary) plays an important role in decision-making. Its major institutions include the [Supreme Court of the Republic of Poland](/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_the_Republic_of_Poland) (*Sąd Najwyższy*); the [Supreme Administrative Court of the Republic of Poland](/wiki/Supreme_Administrative_Court_of_the_Republic_of_Poland) (*Naczelny Sąd Administracyjny*); the [Constitutional Tribunal of the Republic of Poland](/wiki/Constitutional_Tribunal_of_the_Republic_of_Poland) (*Trybunał Konstytucyjny*); and the [State Tribunal of the Republic of Poland](/wiki/State_Tribunal_of_the_Republic_of_Poland) (*Trybunał Stanu*). On the approval of the Senat, the Sejm also appoints the [ombudsman](/wiki/Polish_Ombudsman) or the Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection (*Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich*) for a five-year term. The ombudsman has the duty of guarding the observance and implementation of the rights and liberties of Polish [citizens](/wiki/Citizenship) and [residents](/wiki/Residency_(domicile)), of the law and of principles of community life and social justice.

### Law[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [left|upright|thumb|The](/wiki/File:Polishsupremecourt.JPEG) [Supreme Court](/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_Poland) building in [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw)

The [Constitution of Poland](/wiki/Constitution_of_Poland) is the supreme law in contemporary Poland, and the Polish legal system is based on the principle of civil rights, governed by the code of Civil Law. Historically, the most famous Polish legal act is the [Constitution of 3 May 1791](/wiki/Constitution_of_3_May_1791). Historian [Norman Davies](/wiki/Norman_Davies) describes it as the first of its kind in Europe.[[83]](#cite_note-83) The Constitution was instituted as a [Government Act](/wiki/Government_Act) ([Template:Lang-pl](/wiki/Template:Lang-pl)) and then adopted on 3 May 1791 by the [Sejm](/wiki/Sejm) of the [Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth](/wiki/Polish–Lithuanian_Commonwealth). Primarily, it was designed to redress long-standing political defects of the [federative](/wiki/Federation) Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and its [Golden Liberty](/wiki/Golden_Liberty). Previously only the [Henrican articles](/wiki/Henrican_articles) signed by each of Poland's elected kings could perform the function of a set of basic laws.

[thumb|upright|The](/wiki/File:Manuscript_of_the_Constitution_of_the_3rd_May_1791.PNG) [Constitution of 3 May 1791](/wiki/Constitution_of_3_May_1791) has been called the first of its kind in Europe[[83]](#cite_note-83) The new Constitution introduced political equality between [townspeople](/wiki/Townspeople) and the [nobility](/wiki/Nobility) ([*szlachta*](/wiki/Szlachta)), and placed the [peasants](/wiki/Peasant) under the protection of the government. The Constitution abolished pernicious parliamentary institutions such as the [*liberum veto*](/wiki/Liberum_veto), which at one time had placed the [sejm](/wiki/Sejm) at the mercy of any deputy who might choose, or be [bribed](/wiki/Bribery) by an interest or foreign power, to have rescinded all the legislation that had been passed by that sejm. The 3 May Constitution sought to supplant the existing anarchy fostered by some of the country's [reactionary](/wiki/Reactionary) [magnates](/wiki/Magnate), with a more [egalitarian](/wiki/Egalitarianism) and democratic [constitutional monarchy](/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy). The adoption of [the constitution](/wiki/Wikisource:Constitution_of_3_May_1791) was treated as a threat by Poland's neighbours.[[84]](#cite_note-84) In response [Prussia](/wiki/Prussia), [Austria](/wiki/Austria) and Russia formed an anti-Polish alliance and over the next decade collaborated with one another to [partition](/wiki/Partitions_of_Poland) their weaker neighbour and destroyed the Polish state. In the words of two of its co-authors, [Ignacy Potocki](/wiki/Ignacy_Potocki) and [Hugo Kołłątaj](/wiki/Hugo_Kołłątaj), the constitution represented "the last will and testament of the expiring Fatherland." Despite this, its text influenced many later [democratic movements](/wiki/Democratic_movement) across the globe.[[85]](#cite_note-85) In Poland, freedom of expression is guaranteed by the Article 25 (section I. The Republic) and Article 54 (section II. The Freedoms, Rights and Obligations of Persons and Citizens) of the [Constitution of Poland](/wiki/Constitution_of_Poland).

[thumb|140px|left|](/wiki/File:Manor_of_Kraszewski_family_in_Romanów_-_Exhibition_hall_-_18.jpg)[Narcyza Żmichowska](/wiki/Narcyza_Żmichowska) was a proponent of early [feminism in Poland](/wiki/Feminism_in_Poland)

[Feminism in Poland](/wiki/Feminism_in_Poland) started in the 1800s in the age of the foreign Partitions. Poland's precursor of feminism, [Narcyza Żmichowska](/wiki/Narcyza_Żmichowska), founded a group of [Suffragettes](/wiki/Suffragettes) in 1842. Prior to the [last Partition](/wiki/Third_Partition_of_Poland) in 1795, tax-paying females were allowed to take part in political life. Since 1918, following the return to independence, all women could vote. Poland was the 15th (12th sovereign) country to introduce universal women's suffrage. Currently, in Poland [abortion](/wiki/Abortion) is allowed only in special circumstances, such as when the woman's life or health is endangered by the continuation of pregnancy, when the pregnancy is a result of a criminal act, or when the fetus is seriously malformed.[[86]](#cite_note-86)[[87]](#cite_note-87) Homosexuality in Poland was confirmed as legal in 1932. Poland recognises gender change.[[88]](#cite_note-88) [thumb|right|](/wiki/File:Marsz_dla_zycia_i_rodziny_2007_06.jpg)[March for Life and Family](/wiki/March_for_Life_and_Family)

A 2010 article in [*Rzeczpospolita*](/wiki/Rzeczpospolita_(newspaper)) reported that in a 2008 study three-quarters of Poles were against gay marriage and the adoption of children by gay couples.[[89]](#cite_note-89) The same study revealed that 66% of respondents were opposed to [Pride parade](/wiki/Pride_parade) as the demonstration of a way of life, and 69% believed that gay people should not show their sexual orientation in public.[[90]](#cite_note-90) Poland belongs to the group of 'Tier 1'[[91]](#cite_note-91) (countries whose governments fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards.) in [Trafficking in Persons Report](/wiki/Trafficking_in_Persons_Report). Trafficking women is 'illegal and rare' (top results worldwide).[[92]](#cite_note-92) Poland's current constitution was adopted by the [National Assembly of Poland](/wiki/National_Assembly_of_Poland) on 2 April 1997, approved by a national [referendum](/wiki/Referendum) on 25 May 1997, and came into effect on 17 October 1997. It guarantees a multi-party state, the freedoms of religion, speech and assembly, and specifically casts off many Communist ideals to create a '[free market](/wiki/Free_market) [economic system'](/wiki/Economic_system). It requires public officials to pursue ecologically sound public policy and acknowledges the inviolability of the home, the right to form trade unions, and to strike, whilst at the same time prohibiting the practices of forced medical experimentation, [torture](/wiki/Torture) and [corporal punishment](/wiki/Corporal_punishment).

### Foreign relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

In recent years, Poland has extended its responsibilities and position in European and international affairs, supporting and establishing friendly relations with other European nations and a large number of 'developing' countries.

Poland is a member of the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union), [NATO](/wiki/NATO), the [UN](/wiki/United_Nations), the [World Trade Organization](/wiki/World_Trade_Organization), the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development) (OECD), [European Economic Area](/wiki/European_Economic_Area), [International Energy Agency](/wiki/International_Energy_Agency), [Council of Europe](/wiki/Council_of_Europe), [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](/wiki/Organization_for_Security_and_Co-operation_in_Europe), [International Atomic Energy Agency](/wiki/International_Atomic_Energy_Agency), [European Space Agency](/wiki/European_Space_Agency), [G6](/wiki/G6_(EU)), [Council of the Baltic Sea States](/wiki/Council_of_the_Baltic_Sea_States), [Visegrád Group](/wiki/Visegrád_Group), [Weimar Triangle](/wiki/Weimar_Triangle) and [Schengen Agreement](/wiki/Schengen_Agreement).

In 1994, Poland became an associate member of the European Union (EU) and its defensive arm, the [Western European Union](/wiki/Western_European_Union) (WEU), having submitted preliminary documentation for full membership in 1996, it formally joined the European Union in May 2004, along with the other members of the [Visegrád group](/wiki/Visegrád_group). In 1996, Poland achieved full [OECD](/wiki/OECD) membership, and at the 1997 Madrid Summit was invited to join the [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation](/wiki/North_Atlantic_Treaty_Organisation) (NATO) in the first wave of [policy enlargement](/wiki/Enlargement_of_NATO) finally becoming a full member of NATO in March 1999.

[thumb|right|](/wiki/File:Ministerstwo_Spraw_Zagraniczych_al._Szucha_23.JPG)[Ministry of Foreign Affairs](/wiki/Ministry_of_Foreign_Affairs_(Poland)) located in [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw)

As changes since the fall of Communism in 1989 have redrawn the map of Europe, Poland has tried to forge strong and mutually beneficial relationships with its seven new neighbours, this has notably included signing 'friendship treaties' to replace links severed by the collapse of the [Warsaw Pact](/wiki/Warsaw_Pact). The Poles have forged special relationships with [Lithuania](/wiki/Lithuania) and particularly [Ukraine](/wiki/Ukraine),[[93]](#cite_note-93) with whom they co-hosted the UEFA [Euro 2012](/wiki/Euro_2012) football tournament, in an effort to firmly anchor these countries within the Western world and provide them with an alternative to aligning themselves with the [Russian Federation](/wiki/Russian_Federation) respectively. Despite many positive developments in the region, Poland has found itself in a position where it must seek to defend the rights of ethnic Poles living in the [former Soviet Union](/wiki/Former_Soviet_Union); this is particularly true of [Belarus](/wiki/Belarus), where in 2005 the [Lukashenko](/wiki/Lukashenko) regime launched a campaign against the Polish ethnic minority.[[94]](#cite_note-94) Poland is the sixth most populous member state of the European Union and has a grand total of 51 representatives in the [European Parliament](/wiki/European_Parliament). Ever since joining the union in 2004, successive Polish governments have pursued policies to increase the country's role in European and regional affairs.

### Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

Poland's current [voivodeships](/wiki/Voivodeships_of_Poland) (provinces) are largely based on the country's historic regions, whereas those of the past two decades (to 1998) had been centred on and named for individual cities. The new units range in area from less than [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) for Opole Voivodeship to more than [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) for Masovian Voivodeship. Administrative authority at voivodeship level is shared between a government-appointed [voivode](/wiki/Voivode) (governor), an elected regional assembly ([*sejmik*](/wiki/Voivodeship_sejmik)) and an executive elected by that assembly.

The voivodeships are subdivided into [*powiats*](/wiki/Powiat) (often referred to in English as counties), and these are further divided into [*gminas*](/wiki/Gmina) (also known as communes or municipalities). Major cities normally have the status of both *gmina* and *powiat*. Poland has 16 voivodeships, 379 powiats (including 65 cities with *powiat* status), and 2,478 *gminas*.

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| [Template:Polish Voivodeships](/wiki/Template:Polish_Voivodeships) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | [**Voivodeship**](/wiki/Voivodeship) | | [**Capital city or cities**](/wiki/List_of_cities_and_towns_in_Poland) | | [***in English***](/wiki/English_language) | [***in Polish***](/wiki/Polish_language) | | [Greater Poland](/wiki/Greater_Poland_Voivodeship) | *Wielkopolskie* | [Poznań](/wiki/Poznań) | | [Kuyavian-Pomeranian](/wiki/Kuyavian-Pomeranian_Voivodeship) | *Kujawsko-Pomorskie* | [Bydgoszcz](/wiki/Bydgoszcz) / [Toruń](/wiki/Toruń) | | [Lesser Poland](/wiki/Lesser_Poland_Voivodeship) | *Małopolskie* | [Kraków](/wiki/Kraków) | | [Łódź](/wiki/Łódź_Voivodeship) | *Łódzkie* | [Łódź](/wiki/Łódź) | | [Lower Silesian](/wiki/Lower_Silesian_Voivodeship) | *Dolnośląskie* | [Wrocław](/wiki/Wrocław) | | [Lublin](/wiki/Lublin_Voivodeship) | *Lubelskie* | [Lublin](/wiki/Lublin) | | [Lubusz](/wiki/Lubusz_Voivodeship) | *Lubuskie* | [Gorzów Wielkopolski](/wiki/Gorzów_Wielkopolski) / [Zielona Góra](/wiki/Zielona_Góra) | | [Masovian](/wiki/Masovian_Voivodeship) | *Mazowieckie* | [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw) | | [Opole](/wiki/Opole_Voivodeship) | *Opolskie* | [Opole](/wiki/Opole) | | [Podlaskie](/wiki/Podlaskie_Voivodeship) | *Podlaskie* | [Białystok](/wiki/Białystok) | | [Pomeranian](/wiki/Pomeranian_Voivodeship) | *Pomorskie* | [Gdańsk](/wiki/Gdańsk) | | [Silesian](/wiki/Silesian_Voivodeship) | *Śląskie* | [Katowice](/wiki/Katowice) | | [Subcarpathian](/wiki/Subcarpathian_Voivodeship) | *Podkarpackie* | [Rzeszów](/wiki/Rzeszów) | | [Świętokrzyskie](/wiki/Świętokrzyskie_Voivodeship) (Holy Cross) | *Świętokrzyskie* | [Kielce](/wiki/Kielce) | | [Warmian-Masurian](/wiki/Warmian-Masurian_Voivodeship) | *Warmińsko-Mazurskie* | [Olsztyn](/wiki/Olsztyn) | | [West Pomeranian](/wiki/West_Pomeranian_Voivodeship) | *Zachodniopomorskie* | [Szczecin](/wiki/Szczecin) | |
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### Military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|](/wiki/File:F-16_Jastrząb_(48).jpg)[Polish Air Force](/wiki/Polish_Air_Force) [F-16 Fighting Falcons](/wiki/F-16_Fighting_Falcon) — a single-engine [multirole](/wiki/Multirole_combat_aircraft) [fighter aircraft](/wiki/Fighter_aircraft)

The Polish armed forces are composed of four branches: [Land Forces](/wiki/Polish_Land_Forces) (*Wojska Lądowe*), [Navy](/wiki/Polish_Navy) (*Marynarka Wojenna*), [Air Force](/wiki/Polish_Air_Force) (*Siły Powietrzne*) and [Special Forces](/wiki/Special_forces_of_Poland) (*Wojska Specjalne*). The military is subordinate to the [Minister for National Defence](/wiki/Ministry_of_National_Defence_of_the_Republic_of_Poland). However, its sole commander-in-chief is the President of the Republic.

The Polish army consists of 65,000 active personnel, whilst the navy and air force respectively employ 14,300 and 26,126 servicemen and women. The Polish Navy primarily operates in the Baltic Sea and conducts operations such as maritime patrol, search and rescue for the section of the Baltic under Polish sovereignty, as well as hydrographic measurements and research. Also, the Polish Navy played a more international role as part of the [2003 invasion of Iraq](/wiki/2003_invasion_of_Iraq), providing logistical support for the [United States Navy](/wiki/United_States_Navy). The current position of the Polish Air Force is much the same; it has routinely taken part in [Baltic Air Policing](/wiki/Baltic_Air_Policing) assignments, but otherwise, with the exception of a number of units serving in [Afghanistan](/wiki/Afghanistan), has seen no active combat since the end of the Second World War. In 2003, the [F-16C](/wiki/F-16_Fighting_Falcon) Block 52 was chosen as the new general multi-role fighter for the air force, the first deliveries taking place in November 2006.

[thumb|left|Crew of a](/wiki/File:Ex_STEADFAST_JAZZ_(10710349373).jpg) [KTO Rosomak](/wiki/KTO_Rosomak) [armored personnel carrier](/wiki/Armoured_personnel_carrier) during a [NATO](/wiki/NATO) exercise at the Military Training Area near [Drawsko Pomorskie](/wiki/Drawsko_Pomorskie)

The most important mission of the armed forces is the defence of Polish territorial integrity and Polish interests abroad.[[95]](#cite_note-95) Poland's national security goal is to further integrate with [NATO](/wiki/NATO) and European defence, economic, and political institutions through the modernisation and reorganisation of its military.[[95]](#cite_note-95) The armed forces are being re-organised according to NATO standards, and since 2010, the transition to an entirely contract-based military has been completed. During the previous period, men were obliged to undertake compulsory military service. In the final stage of validity of this type of military service (since 2007 until the amendment of the law on conscription in 2008) the duration of compulsory service amounted nine months.[[96]](#cite_note-96) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Ćwiczenia_3_Flotylli_Okrętów_02.jpg)[Super Seasprite](/wiki/Kaman_SH-2G_Super_Seasprite) ship-based helicopter flying by the [frigate](/wiki/Frigate) [ORP Generał Kazimierz Pułaski](/wiki/ORP_Generał_Kazimierz_Pułaski) during an exercise in the [Baltic Sea](/wiki/Baltic_Sea)

Polish military doctrine reflects the same defensive nature as that of its NATO partners. From 1953 to 2009 Poland was a large contributor to various United Nations peacekeeping missions.[[95]](#cite_note-95)[[97]](#cite_note-97) The Polish Armed Forces took part in the [2003 invasion of Iraq](/wiki/2003_invasion_of_Iraq), deploying 2,500 soldiers in the south of that country and commanding the 17-nation [Multinational force in Iraq](/wiki/Multinational_force_in_Iraq).

The military was temporarily, but severely, affected by the loss of many of its top commanders in the wake the [2010 Polish Air Force Tu-154 crash](/wiki/2010_Polish_Air_Force_Tu-154_crash) near Smolensk, Russia, which killed all 96 passengers and crew, including, among others, the Chief of the Polish Army's General Staff [Franciszek Gągor](/wiki/Franciszek_Gągor) and Polish Air Force commanding general [Andrzej Błasik](/wiki/Andrzej_Błasik). They were en route from Warsaw to attend an event to mark the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre, whose site is commemorated approximately [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) west of [Smolensk](/wiki/Smolensk).[[98]](#cite_note-98)[[99]](#cite_note-99)

### Law enforcement and emergency services[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|left||Mounted](/wiki/File:Central_Silesian_Park_-_Mounted_police_02.jpg) [Police](/wiki/Policja) officers in the [Silesian Park](/wiki/Silesian_Park) Poland has a highly developed system of law enforcement with a long history of effective policing by the [State Police Service](/wiki/Policja). The structure of law enforcement agencies within Poland is a multi-tier one, with the State Police providing criminal-investigative services, [Municipal Police](/wiki/Municipal_Police) serving to maintain public order and a number of other specialised agencies, such as the [Polish Border Guard](/wiki/Polish_Border_Guard), acting to fulfil their assigned missions. In addition to these state services, private security companies are also common, although they possess no powers assigned to state agencies, such as, for example, the power to make an arrest or detain a suspect.

Emergency services in Poland consist of the [emergency medical services](/wiki/Emergency_medical_services_in_Poland), [search and rescue](/wiki/Search_and_rescue#Poland) units of the [Polish Armed Forces](/wiki/Polish_Armed_Forces) and [State Fire Service](/wiki/State_Fire_Service). Emergency medical services in Poland are, unlike other services, provided for by local and regional government.

Since joining the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union) all of Poland's emergency services have been undergoing major restructuring and have, in the process, acquired large amounts of new equipment and staff.[[100]](#cite_note-100) All emergency services personnel are now uniformed and can be easily recognised thanks to a number of innovative design features, such as reflective paint and printing, present throughout their service dress and vehicle liveries. In addition to this, in an effort to comply with EU standards and safety regulations, the police and other agencies have been steadily replacing and modernising their fleets of vehicles; this has left them with thousands of new automobiles, as well as many new aircraft, boats and helicopters.[[101]](#cite_note-101)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|400px|](/wiki/File:Panorama_ul._Emilii_Plater_w_Warszawie_radek_kołakowski.jpg)[Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw) is the financial and economic hub of Poland Poland's high-income economy[[12]](#cite_note-12) is considered to be one of the largest of the post-Communist countries and is one of the fastest growing within the EU.[[102]](#cite_note-102) Having a strong domestic market, low private debt, flexible currency, and not being dependent on a single export sector, Poland is the only European economy to have avoided the [late-2000s recession](/wiki/Great_Recession).[[103]](#cite_note-103) Since the [fall of the communist government](/wiki/Revolutions_of_1989), Poland has pursued a policy [of liberalising](/wiki/Neoliberalism) the economy. It is an example of the transition from a [centrally planned](/wiki/Planned_economy) to a primarily [market-based economy](/wiki/Market_economy). The country's most successful exports include machinery, furniture, food products, clothing, shoes and cosmetics.[[104]](#cite_note-104)[[105]](#cite_note-105) Poland's largets trading partner is Germany.[[106]](#cite_note-106) [thumb|left|Poland is a member of the](/wiki/File:Schengenzone.svg) [Schengen Area](/wiki/Schengen_Area) and the EU [single market](/wiki/Internal_market)

The [privatization](/wiki/Privatization) of small and medium state-owned companies and a liberal law on establishing new firms have allowed the development of the private sector. Also, several [consumer rights](/wiki/Consumer_protection) organizations have become active in the country. Restructuring and privatisation of "sensitive sectors" such as coal, steel, rail transport and energy has been continuing since 1990. The biggest privatisations have been the sale of the national [telecoms](/wiki/Telecommunication) firm [Telekomunikacja Polska](/wiki/Orange_Polska) to [France Télécom](/wiki/Orange_S.A.) in 2000, and an issue of 30% of the shares in Poland's largest bank, [PKO Bank Polski](/wiki/PKO_Bank_Polski), on the Polish stockmarket in 2004.

The Polish banking sector is the largest in East Central/Eastern European region,[[107]](#cite_note-107) with 32.3 branches per 100,000 adults.[[108]](#cite_note-108)[[109]](#cite_note-109) The banks are the largest and most developed sector of the country's [financial markets](/wiki/Financial_market). They are regulated by the [Polish Financial Supervision Authority](/wiki/Financial_Supervision_Authority_(Poland)). During the transformation to a market-oriented economy, the government privatized several banks, recapitalized the rest, and introduced legal reforms that made the sector more competitive. This has attracted a significant number of strategic foreign investors (ICFI). Poland's banking sector has approximately 5 national banks, a network of nearly 600 cooperative banks and 18 branches of foreign-owned banks. In addition, foreign investors have controlling stakes in nearly 40 commercial banks, which make up 68% of the banking capital.[[107]](#cite_note-107) [thumb|Ports of](/wiki/File:Stocznia.jpg) [Szczecin](/wiki/Port_of_Szczecin) and [Gdynia](/wiki/Port_of_Gdynia) serve as the country's two major centers for the shipbuilding industry and maritime commerce

Poland has a large number of private farms in its agricultural sector, with the potential to become a leading producer of food in the European Union. The biggest money-makers abroad include smoked and fresh fish, fine chocolate, and dairy products, meats and specialty breads,[[110]](#cite_note-110) with the exchange rate conducive to export growth.[[111]](#cite_note-111) Food exports amounted to 62 billion [zloty](/wiki/Zloty) in 2011, increasing by 17% from 2010.[[112]](#cite_note-112) Structural reforms in health care, education, the pension system, and state administration have resulted in larger-than-expected fiscal pressures. Warsaw leads Central Europe in foreign investment.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) GDP growth had been strong and steady from 1993 to 2000 with only a short slowdown from 2001 to 2002, also the country avoided recession in 2008.

The economy had growth of 3.7% annually in 2003, a rise from 1.4% annually in 2002. In 2004, GDP growth equaled 5.4%, in 2005 3.3% and in 2006 6.2%.[[113]](#cite_note-113) According to [Eurostat](/wiki/Eurostat) data, Polish PPS GDP per capita stood at 67% of the EU average in 2012.[[114]](#cite_note-114) In terms of the clarity, efficiency and neutrality of Poland's legal framework for multinational investors, a 2012 report by the World Economic Forum concluded that the ongoing foreign business disputes may "have damaged Poland's reputation as an attractive location for [FDI](/wiki/Foreign_direct_investment)" from other countries by creating the impression of "substandard reputation for maintaining an efficient and neutral framework to settle business disputes."[[115]](#cite_note-115) [Ernst and Young's](/wiki/Ernst_and_Young) 2010 European attractiveness survey reported that Poland saw a 52% decrease in FDI foreign job creation and a 42% decrease in number of FDI projects since 2008.[[116]](#cite_note-116) Average salaries in the enterprise sector in December 2010 were 3,848 PLN (1,012 euro or 1,374 US dollars)[[117]](#cite_note-117) and growing sharply.[[118]](#cite_note-118) Salaries vary between the regions: the [median](/wiki/Median) wage in the capital city Warsaw was 4,603 PLN (1,177 euro or 1,680 US dollars) while in [Kielce](/wiki/Kielce) it was 3,083 PLN (788 euro or 1125 US dollars). There is a wide distribution of salaries among the various districts of Poland. They range from 2,020 PLN (517 euro or 737 US dollars) in [Kępno County](/wiki/Kępno_County), which is located in [Greater Poland Voivodeship](/wiki/Greater_Poland_Voivodeship) to 5,616 (1,436 euro or 2,050 US dollars) in [Lubin County](/wiki/Lubin_County), which lies in [Lower Silesian Voivodeship](/wiki/Lower_Silesian_Voivodeship).[[119]](#cite_note-119) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Solaris_Bolechowo_(003).jpg)[Solaris Bus & Coach](/wiki/Solaris_Bus_&_Coach) is a family-owned bus, coach and tram manufacturer near [Poznań](/wiki/Poznań)

According to a [Credit Suisse](/wiki/Credit_Suisse) report, Poles are the second wealthiest (after [Czechs](/wiki/Czech_Republic)) of the Central European peoples.[[120]](#cite_note-120)[[121]](#cite_note-121)[[122]](#cite_note-122) Since the opening of the labor market in the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union), Poland experienced a [mass emigration](/wiki/21st_century_economic_migration_of_Poles) of over 2.3 million abroad, mainly due to higher wages offered abroad, and due to the raise in levels of [unemployment](/wiki/Unemployment_in_Poland) following the global [Great Recession](/wiki/Great_Recession) of 2008.[[123]](#cite_note-123)[[124]](#cite_note-124)<ref name=worldbank>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> The out migration has increased the average wages for the workers who remained in Poland, in particular for those with intermediate level skills.[[125]](#cite_note-125) Products and goods manufactured in Poland include: electronics, buses ([Solaris](/wiki/Solaris_Bus_&_Coach), [Solbus](/wiki/Solbus)), helicopters ([PZL Świdnik](/wiki/PZL)), trains ([Pesa SA](/wiki/Pesa_SA)), transport equipment, planes ([PZL Mielec](/wiki/PZL_Mielec)), ships, military equipment (Bumar-Łabędy SA), medicines (Polpharma, Polfa), food ([Tymbark](/wiki/Tymbark_(company))), clothes ([LLP](/wiki/LPP_(company))), glass, pottery ([Bolesławiec](/wiki/Boleslawiec_Pottery)), chemical products and others.

### Corporations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Warsaw8gh.jpg)[Warsaw Stock Exchange](/wiki/Warsaw_Stock_Exchange) is one of East-Central Europe's largest exchanges by market capitalization

Poland is recognised as a regional economic leader within East-Central Europe, with nearly 40 percent of the 500 biggest companies in the region (by revenues) as well as a [high globalisation rate](/wiki/Globalisation_index).[[126]](#cite_note-126) Poland was the only member of the EU to avoid the [recession of the late 2000s](/wiki/Great_Recession). The country's largest firms comprise the [WIG30](/wiki/WIG30) index, which is traded on the [Warsaw Stock Exchange](/wiki/Warsaw_Stock_Exchange).

Well known Polish brands include, among others [PKO BP](/wiki/PKO_Bank_Polski), [PKN Orlen](/wiki/PKN_Orlen), [PGE](/wiki/Polska_Grupa_Energetyczna), [PZU](/wiki/Powszechny_Zakład_Ubezpieczeń), [PGNiG](/wiki/PGNiG), [Tauron Group](/wiki/Tauron_Group), [Lotos Group](/wiki/Grupa_Lotos), [KGHM Polska Miedź](/wiki/KGHM_Polska_Miedź), [Asseco](/wiki/Asseco), [Plus](/wiki/Plus_(telecommunications_Poland)), [Play](/wiki/Play_(telecommunications)), [PLL LOT](/wiki/LOT_Polish_Airlines), [Poczta Polska](/wiki/Poczta_Polska), [PKP](/wiki/Polish_State_Railways), [Biedronka](/wiki/Biedronka), and [TVP](/wiki/Telewizja_Polska).[[127]](#cite_note-127) Poland is recognised as having an economy with development potential, overtaking the [Netherlands](/wiki/Netherlands) in mid-2010 to become Europe's sixth largest economy.[[128]](#cite_note-128) [Foreign Direct Investment](/wiki/Foreign_Direct_Investment) in Poland has remained steady ever since the country's political transformation following the [Round Table Agreement](/wiki/Polish_Round_Table_Agreement) in 1989. However, problems still exist—it is believed that progress of privatization was uneven across sectors due to emergence of interest groups supporting government's push for the reforms based on *feasibility* rather than *efficiency*, at the cost of Poland's remaining sectors in need of development and modernisation, such as the extractive industries.[[129]](#cite_note-129) The list includes the largest companies by turnover in 2011 (not including banks or insurance companies):

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rank 2011** [**[130]**](#cite_note-130) | **Corporation** | **Sector** | **Headquarters** | **Revenue (Thou.  PLN)** | **Profit (Thou.  PLN)** | **Employees** |
| 1. | [PKN Orlen SA](/wiki/PKN_Orlen) | oil and gas | [Płock](/wiki/Płock) | 79 037 121 | 2 396 447 | 4,445 |
| 2. | [Lotos Group SA](/wiki/Grupa_Lotos) | oil and gas | [Gdańsk](/wiki/Gdańsk) | 29 258 539 | 584 878 | 5,168 |
| 3. | [PGE SA](/wiki/Polska_Grupa_Energetyczna) | energy | [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw) | 28 111 354 | 6 165 394 | 44,317 |
| 4. | [Jerónimo Martins](/wiki/Jerónimo_Martins) | retail | [Kostrzyn](/wiki/Kostrzyn) | 25 285 407 | *N/A* | 36,419 |
| 5. | [PGNiG SA](/wiki/PGNiG) | oil and gas | [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw) | 23 003 534 | 1 711 787 | 33,071 |
| 6. | [Tauron Group SA](/wiki/Tauron_Group) | energy | [Katowice](/wiki/Katowice) | 20 755 222 | 1 565 936 | 26,710 |
| 7. | [KGHM Polska Miedź SA](/wiki/KGHM_Polska_Miedź) | mining | [Lubin](/wiki/Lubin) | 20 097 392 | 13 653 597 | 18,578 |
| 8. | [Metro Group Poland](/wiki/Metro_AG) | retail | [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw) | 17 200 000 | *N/A* | 22,556 |
| 9. | [Fiat Auto Poland SA](/wiki/Fiat) | automotive | [Bielsko-Biała](/wiki/Bielsko-Biała) | 16 513 651 | 83 919 | 5,303 |
| 10. | [Orange Polska](/wiki/Orange_Polska) | telecommunications | [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw) | 14 922 000 | 1 785 000 | 23,805 |

### Tourism[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Widoczek_10062005_2.jpg)[Table Mountains](/wiki/Table_Mountains) are a popular destination for hikers from across the country. The 42 kilometre (26 mi) mountain range forms a part of the [Central Sudetes](/wiki/Central_Sudetes) in south-western Poland

Poland experienced an increase in the number of tourists after joining the European Union.[[131]](#cite_note-131) Tourism contributes significantly to Poland's overall economy and makes up a relatively large proportion of the country's service market.[[132]](#cite_note-132)[thumb|left|The city of](/wiki/File:Ratusz_Zamosc.jpg) [Zamość](/wiki/Zamość) is a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](/wiki/UNESCO_World_Heritage_Site) [Kraków](/wiki/Kraków) was the former capital and a relic of [Poland's Golden Age](/wiki/Renaissance_in_Poland) of Renaissance. The city served as the [place of coronation](/wiki/Royal_Road,_Kraków) of [most Polish kings](/wiki/Royal_coronations_in_Poland).

Kraków was named a [European Capital of Culture](/wiki/European_Capital_of_Culture) by the European Union for the year 2000. Also, the city of [Wrocław](/wiki/Wrocław) was designated as a European Capital of Culture in 2016.[[133]](#cite_note-133) The [Old Town](/wiki/Warsaw_Old_Town) of Poland's capital, [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw), was reconstructed after [its wartime destruction](/wiki/Planned_destruction_of_Warsaw). Other cities attracting tourists include [Gdańsk](/wiki/Gdańsk), [Poznań](/wiki/Poznań), [Szczecin](/wiki/Szczecin), [Lublin](/wiki/Lublin) and [Toruń](/wiki/Toruń). The historic site of the Nazi-German [Auschwitz](/wiki/Auschwitz) concentration camp is located near [Oświęcim](/wiki/Oświęcim).

Poland's main tourist offerings include outdoor activities such as skiing, sailing and mountain hiking, as well as agrotourism, sightseeing and hiking. Poland is the 16th most visited country in the world by foreign tourists, as ranked by World Tourism Organization ([UNWTO](/wiki/UNWTO)).[[134]](#cite_note-134) Tourist destinations include the [Baltic Sea](/wiki/Baltic_Sea) coast in the north, the [Masurian Lake District](/wiki/Masurian_Lake_District) and [Białowieża Forest](/wiki/Białowieża_Forest) in the east, the northern [Karkonosze](/wiki/Karkonosze), the [Table Mountains](/wiki/Table_Mountains) and the [Tatra Mountains](/wiki/Tatra_Mountains), where [Rysy](/wiki/Rysy), the highest peak of Poland, and the famous [Orla Perć](/wiki/Orla_Perć) long-distance path are located. The [Pieniny](/wiki/Pieniny) and [Bieszczady Mountains](/wiki/Bieszczady_Mountains) lie in the extreme south-east.[[135]](#cite_note-135) There are [over 100 castles](/wiki/List_of_castles_in_Poland) in the country, many along the popular [Trail of the Eagles' Nests](/wiki/Trail_of_the_Eagles'_Nests).[[136]](#cite_note-136)[thumb|right|500px|](/wiki/File:Marienburg_2004_Panorama.jpg)[Malbork Castle](/wiki/Malbork_Castle) is the world's largest brick complex and a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](/wiki/UNESCO_World_Heritage_Site)

### Energy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Bełchatów_Elektrownia.jpg)[Bełchatów Power Station](/wiki/Bełchatów_Power_Station) is a lignite-fired power station that produces 27-28 TWh of electricity per year, or 20% of the total power generation in Poland.

The electricity generation sector in Poland is largely [fossil-fuel](/wiki/Fossil_fuel)–based. Many power plants nationwide use Poland's position as a major European exporter of coal to their advantage by continuing to use coal as the primary raw material in production of their energy. In 2013, Poland scored 48 out of 129 states in the Energy Sustainability Index.[[137]](#cite_note-137) The three largest Polish coal mining firms ([Węglokoks](/wiki/Węglokoks), [Kompania Węglowa](/wiki/Kompania_Węglowa) and [JSW](/wiki/Jastrzębska_Spółka_Węglowa)) extract around 100 million tonnes of coal annually. All three of these companies are key constituents of the [Warsaw Stock Exchange's](/wiki/Warsaw_Stock_Exchange) lead economic indexes.

Renewable forms of energy account for a small[Template:Quantify](/wiki/Template:Quantify) proportion of Poland's full energy generation capacity.[[138]](#cite_note-138) However, the national government has set targets for the development of renewable energy sources in Poland which should see the portion of power produced by renewable resources climb to 7.5% by 2010 and 15% by 2020. This is to be achieved mainly through the construction of [wind farms](/wiki/Wind_farm) and a number of [hydroelectric](/wiki/Hydroelectric) stations.

Poland is thought to have around 164,800,000,000 m3 of proven natural gas reserves and around 96,380,000 barrels of proven oil reserves. These reserves are exploited by energy supply companies such as [PKN Orlen](/wiki/PKN_Orlen) ("the only Polish company listed in the [Fortune Global 500](/wiki/Fortune_Global_500)"). However, the small amounts of fossil fuels naturally occurring in Poland is insufficient to satisfy the full energy consumption needs of the population. Therefore, the country is a net importer of oil and natural gas.

### Transport[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Wezelsosnicafromthesky.JPG)[A1](/wiki/A1_autostrada_(Poland)), [A4](/wiki/A4_autostrada_(Poland)) motorways and [national road 44](/wiki/National_roads_in_Poland) junction near [Gliwice](/wiki/Gliwice)

Transport in Poland is provided by means of [rail](/wiki/Rail_transport_in_Poland), [road](/wiki/Roads_and_expressways_in_Poland), [marine shipping](/wiki/Polish_Merchant_Navy) and [air travel.](/wiki/List_of_airports_in_Poland) Positioned in Central Europe with its eastern and part of its northeastern border constituting the longest land border of the [Schengen Area](/wiki/Schengen_Area) with the rest of [Northern](/wiki/Northern_Europe) and [Central Europe](/wiki/Central_Europe).

Since joining the EU in May 2004, Poland has invested large amounts of public funds into modernization projects of its transport networks. The country now has a developing expressway network composed of motorways such as the [A1](/wiki/A1_autostrada_(Poland)), [A2](/wiki/A2_autostrada_(Poland)), [A4](/wiki/A4_autostrada_(Poland)), [A8](/wiki/A8_autostrada_(Poland)), [A18](/wiki/A18_autostrada_(Poland)) and express roads such as the [S1](/wiki/Expressway_S1_(Poland)), [S3](/wiki/Expressway_S3_(Poland)), [S5](/wiki/Expressway_S5_(Poland)), [S7](/wiki/Expressway_S7_(Poland)), [S8](/wiki/Expressway_S8_(Poland)). In addition to these newly built roads, many local and regional roads are being fixed as part of a national programme to rebuild all roads in Poland.[[139]](#cite_note-139) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Wrocław_Główny_-_Pendolino.JPG)[PKP Intercity](/wiki/PKP_Intercity) [Pendolino](/wiki/New_Pendolino) at the [Wrocław Główny](/wiki/Wrocław_Główny_railway_station) railway station

In 2015, the nation had [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of railway track. Trains can operate up to [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) on 7.5% of the track. Most trains operate between [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). Part of the system operates at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).[[140]](#cite_note-140)Polish authorities maintain a program of improving operating speeds across the entire Polish rail network. Polish State Railways (PKP) are using new rolling stock such as Siemens Taurus ES64U4, which is in principle capable of speeds up to [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). In December 2014, Poland began to implement [high–speed rail routes](/wiki/High-speed_rail_in_Poland) connecting major Polish cities. The Polish government has revealed that it intends to connect all major cities to a future high-speed rail network by 2020.[[141]](#cite_note-141) The new PKP Pendolino ETR 610 test train set the record for the fastest train in the history of Poland, reaching [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) on 24 November 2013. Previously, the speed record had been [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) since 1985. Most intercity rail routes in Poland are operated by [PKP Intercity](/wiki/PKP_Intercity), whilst regional trains are run by a number of operators, the largest of which is [Przewozy Regionalne](/wiki/Przewozy_Regionalne).

On 14 December 2014, Polish State Railways started passenger service using the PKP Pendolino ED250, operating at 200 km/h speed on 80 km of line between Olszamowice and Zawiercie (part of the [Central Rail Line](/wiki/PKP_rail_line_4) from Warsaw to Kraków). Currently, it is the line with highest railway speed in Poland.

[thumb|219x219px|](/wiki/File:LOT_Boeing_787-8_SP-LRA_Lebeda.jpg)[LOT Polish Airlines](/wiki/LOT_Polish_Airlines) is the world's twelfth oldest air carrier still in operation, originally established on 1 January 1929

The air and maritime transport markets in Poland are largely well developed. Poland has a number of international airports, the largest of which is [Warsaw Chopin Airport](/wiki/Warsaw_Chopin_Airport), the primary global hub for [LOT Polish Airlines](/wiki/LOT_Polish_Airlines). LOT is the 28th [largest European airline](/wiki/List_of_largest_airlines_in_Europe) and the world's 12th [oldest still in operation](/wiki/List_of_airlines_by_foundation_date), established in 1929 from a merger of [Aerolloyd](/wiki/Aerolloyd) (1922) and [Aero](/wiki/Aero_(Polish_airline)) (1925). Other major airports with international connections include [John Paul II International Airport Kraków–Balice](/wiki/John_Paul_II_International_Airport_Kraków–Balice), [Wrocław–Copernicus Airport](/wiki/Wrocław–Copernicus_Airport), [Gdańsk Lech Wałęsa Airport](/wiki/Gdańsk_Lech_Wałęsa_Airport) and [Poznań–Ławica Airport](/wiki/Poznań–Ławica_Airport).

Seaports exist all along Poland's Baltic coast, with most freight operations using [Szczecin](/wiki/Port_of_Szczecin), [Świnoujście](/wiki/Port_of_Świnoujście), [Gdynia](/wiki/Port_of_Gdynia) and [Gdańsk](/wiki/Port_of_Gdańsk) as well as [Police](/wiki/Port_of_Police), [Kołobrzeg](/wiki/Port_of_Kołobrzeg) and [Elbląg](/wiki/Elbląg) as their base. Passenger ferries link Poland with [Scandinavia](/wiki/Scandinavia) all year round; these services are provided from Gdańsk and [Świnoujście](/wiki/Port_of_Świnoujście) by [Polferries](/wiki/Polferries), [Stena Line](/wiki/Stena_Line) from Gdynia and [Unity Line](/wiki/Unity_Line) from the [Port of Świnoujście](/wiki/Port_of_Świnoujście).

### Science and technology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Palac-staszica.jpg)[Staszic Palace](/wiki/Staszic_Palace) in [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw) is home to the [Polish Academy of Sciences](/wiki/Polish_Academy_of_Sciences) According to Frost & Sullivan's Country Industry Forecast the country is becoming a new location for [research and development](/wiki/Research_and_development) investments.[[142]](#cite_note-142) Multinational companies such as: ABB, [Delphi](/wiki/Delphi_Corporation), [GlaxoSmithKline](/wiki/GlaxoSmithKline), [Google](/wiki/Google), [Hewlett–Packard](/wiki/Hewlett–Packard), [IBM](/wiki/IBM), [Intel](/wiki/Intel), [LG Electronics](/wiki/LG_Electronics), [Microsoft](/wiki/Microsoft), [Motorola](/wiki/Motorola), [Siemens](/wiki/Siemens) and [Samsung](/wiki/Samsung) all have set up research and development centres in Poland.[[143]](#cite_note-143) Over 40 research and development centers and 4,500 researchers make Poland the biggest research and development hub in Central and Eastern Europe.[[142]](#cite_note-142)[[144]](#cite_note-144) Companies chose Poland because of the availability of highly qualified labour force, presence of universities, support of authorities, and the largest market in East-Central Europe.[[142]](#cite_note-142) [thumb|upright|Physicist and chemist](/wiki/File:Marie_Curie_c1920.png) [Maria Skłodowska-  
Curie](/wiki/Marie_Curie), the first person to win two [Nobel Prizes](/wiki/Nobel_Prize), established Poland's [Radium Institute](/wiki/Curie_Institute_(Warsaw)) in 1925[[145]](#cite_note-145)

Today, Poland's tertiary education institutions; traditional [universities](/wiki/List_of_universities_in_Poland), as well as technical, medical, and economic institutions, employ around 61,000 researchers and members of staff. There are around 300 research and development institutes, with about 10,000 researchers. In total, there are around 91,000 scientists in Poland today. However, in the 19th and 20th centuries many Polish scientists worked abroad; one of the most important of these exiles was [Maria Skłodowska-Curie](/wiki/Maria_Skłodowska-Curie), a physicist and chemist who lived much of her life in France. In the first half of the 20th century, Poland was a flourishing centre of mathematics. Outstanding Polish mathematicians formed the [Lwów School of Mathematics](/wiki/Lwów_School_of_Mathematics) (with [Stefan Banach](/wiki/Stefan_Banach), [Stanisław Mazur](/wiki/Stanisław_Mazur), [Hugo Steinhaus](/wiki/Hugo_Steinhaus), [Stanisław Ulam](/wiki/Stanisław_Ulam)) and [Warsaw School of Mathematics](/wiki/Warsaw_School_of_Mathematics) (with [Alfred Tarski](/wiki/Alfred_Tarski), [Kazimierz Kuratowski](/wiki/Kazimierz_Kuratowski), [Wacław Sierpiński](/wiki/Wacław_Sierpiński)). The events of [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II) pushed many of them into exile. Such was the case of [Benoît Mandelbrot](/wiki/Benoît_Mandelbrot), whose family left Poland when he was still a child. An alumnus of the Warsaw School of Mathematics was [Antoni Zygmund](/wiki/Antoni_Zygmund), one of the shapers of 20th-century [mathematical analysis](/wiki/Mathematical_analysis).

According to a KPMG report[[146]](#cite_note-146) 80% of Poland's current investors are content with their choice and willing to reinvest.

### Communications[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|left|](/wiki/File:Budynek_TP_SA_w_Warszawie.jpg)[Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw) headquarters of the telecommunications provider [Orange Polska](/wiki/Orange_Polska)

The share of the telecom sector in the GDP is 4.4% (end of 2000 figure), compared to 2.5% in 1996. The coverage increased from 78 users per 1,000 inhabitants in 1989 to 282 in 2000. The value of the telecommunication market is zl 38.2bn (2006), and it grew by 12.4% in 2007 PMR.[[147]](#cite_note-147) The coverage mobile cellular is over 1000 users per 1000 people (2007). Telephones—mobile cellular: 38.7 million (Onet.pl&GUS Report, 2007), telephones—main lines in use: 12.5 million (Telecom Team Report, 2005). In 2012, the process of converting to [Digital terrestrial television](/wiki/Digital_terrestrial_television) started, to be compatible with the rest of Europe.

[thumb|Main](/wiki/File:Poczta_gl_Bydgoszcz_4299.jpg) [Post Office](/wiki/Poczta_Polska) in [Bydgoszcz](/wiki/Bydgoszcz). Poland's postal service can trace its roots to the year 1558

The public postal service in Poland is operated by [*Poczta Polska*](/wiki/Poczta_Polska) (the Polish Post). It was created on 18 October 1558, when King [Sigismund II Augustus](/wiki/Sigismund_II_Augustus) established a permanent postal route from [Kraków](/wiki/Kraków) to [Venice](/wiki/Venice). The service was dissolved during the foreign partitions. After regaining independence in 1918, Poland saw the rapid development of the postal system as new services were introduced including [money transfers](/wiki/Wire_transfer), payment of pensions, delivery of magazines, and [air mail](/wiki/Airmail). During [wars and national uprisings](/wiki/List_of_wars_involving_Poland) communication was provided mainly through the military authorities. Many important events in the history of Poland involved the postal service, like the heroic [defence of the Polish Post Office in Gdańsk](/wiki/Defense_of_the_Polish_Post_Office_in_Danzig) in 1939, and the participation of the Polish Scouts' Postal Service in the [Warsaw Uprising](/wiki/Warsaw_Uprising). Today, the service is a modern state-owned company that provides a number of standard and express delivery as well as home-delivery services.

## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [450px|thumb|Population of Poland 1900-2010 in millions of inhabitants](/wiki/File:Population_of_Poland.svg)

Poland, with 38,544,513 inhabitants, has the eighth-largest population in Europe and the sixth-largest in the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union). It has a population density of 122 inhabitants per square kilometer (328 per square mile).

Poland historically contained [many languages, cultures and religions](/wiki/Historical_demography_of_Poland) on its soil. The country had a particularly large Jewish population prior to [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II), when the [Nazi Germany's](/wiki/Nazism) regime led to the [Holocaust](/wiki/The_Holocaust). There were an estimated 3 million Jews living in Poland before the war—less than 300,000 survived. The outcome of the war, particularly the [shift of Poland's borders](/wiki/Territorial_changes_of_Poland_after_World_War_II) to the area between the [Curzon Line](/wiki/Curzon_Line) and the [Oder-Neisse line](/wiki/Oder-Neisse_line), coupled with post-war [expulsion of minorities](/wiki/World_War_II_evacuation_and_expulsion), significantly reduced the country's ethnic diversity. Over 7 million Germans fled or were expelled from the Polish side of the Oder-Neisse boundary, after the country's borders were re-drawn by the big three Allied powers (United States, Britain and the Soviet Union) after the war.[[148]](#cite_note-148) According to the [2002 census](/wiki/Polish_census_of_2002), 36,983,700 people, or 96.74% of the population, consider themselves [Polish](/wiki/Poles), while 471,500 (1.23%) declared another nationality, and 774,900 (2.03%) did not declare any nationality. The largest minority nationalities and ethnic groups in Poland are [Silesians](/wiki/Silesians) (173,153 according to the census), [Germans](/wiki/German_minority_in_Poland) (152,897 according to the census, 92% of whom live in [Opole Voivodeship](/wiki/Opole_Voivodeship) and [Silesian Voivodeship](/wiki/Silesian_Voivodeship)), [Belarusians](/wiki/Belarusians) (c. 49,000), [Ukrainians](/wiki/Ukrainians) (c. 30,000), [Lithuanians](/wiki/Lithuanian_people), [Russians](/wiki/Russians), [Roma](/wiki/Romani_people), [Jews](/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Poland), [Lemkos](/wiki/Lemkos), [Slovaks](/wiki/Slovaks), [Czechs](/wiki/Czechs), and [Lipka Tatars](/wiki/Lipka_Tatars).[[149]](#cite_note-149) Among foreign citizens, the [Vietnamese](/wiki/Vietnamese_people) are the largest ethnic group, followed by [Armenians](/wiki/Armenians) and [Greeks](/wiki/Greeks_in_Poland).

The [Polish language](/wiki/Polish_language), part of the [West Slavic](/wiki/West_Slavs) branch of the [Slavic languages](/wiki/Slavic_languages), functions as the [official language](/wiki/Official_language) of Poland. Until recent decades Russian was commonly learned as a second language, but has been replaced by English as the most common second language studied and spoken.[[150]](#cite_note-150) In 2015, more than 50% of Poles declared to speak English - Russian came second and German came third, other commonly spoken languages include French, Italian and Spanish.[[151]](#cite_note-151) In recent years, Poland's population has decreased due to an increase in emigration and a decline in the birth rate. Since Poland's accession to the European Union, a significant number of Poles have emigrated, primarily to the United Kingdom, Germany and Ireland in search of better work opportunities abroad.<ref name=onet>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

Polish minorities are still present in the neighboring countries of Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania, as well as in other countries (see [Poles](/wiki/Poles) for population numbers). Altogether, the number of ethnic Poles living abroad is estimated to be around 20 million.[[152]](#cite_note-152) The largest number of [Poles outside of Poland](/wiki/Polish_diaspora) can be found in the [United States](/wiki/Polish_American).[[153]](#cite_note-153) The [total fertility rate](/wiki/Total_fertility_rate) (TFR) in Poland was estimated in 2013 at 1.33 children born to a woman.[[154]](#cite_note-154)

### Urbanization[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

[Template:Largest cities of Poland](/wiki/Template:Largest_cities_of_Poland)[Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

### Languages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|right|*Dolina Jadwigi* — a](/wiki/File:Dolina_Jadwigi_znak.jpg) [bilingual](/wiki/Bilingual) (Polish-Kashubian) road sign with the village name

**Polish** (*język polski*, *polszczyzna*) is a [Slavic language](/wiki/Slavic_languages) spoken primarily in Poland and the [native language](/wiki/First_language) of [Poles](/wiki/Poles). It belongs to the [Lechitic](/wiki/Lechitic_languages) subgroup of [West Slavic languages](/wiki/West_Slavic_languages).[[155]](#cite_note-155) Polish is the [official language](/wiki/Official_language) of Poland, but it is also used throughout the world by [Polish minorities](/wiki/Polish_diaspora) in other countries. It is one of the official [languages of the European Union](/wiki/Languages_of_the_European_Union). Its written standard is the [Polish alphabet](/wiki/Polish_alphabet), which has 9 additions to the letters of the basic [Latin script](/wiki/Latin_script) (*ą*, *ć*, *ę*, *ł*, *ń*, *ó*, *ś*, *ź*, *ż*). The deaf communities use [Polish Sign Language](/wiki/Polish_Sign_Language) belonging to the [German family of Sign Languages](/wiki/German_Sign_Language).

According to the *Act of 6 January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and on the regional languages*,[[156]](#cite_note-156) 16 other languages have officially recognized status of minority languages: 1 regional language, 10 languages of 9 national minorities (minority groups that have their own independent state elsewhere) and 5 languages of 4 ethnic minorities spoken by the members of minorities not having a separate state elsewhere). Jewish and Romani minorities each have 2 minority languages recognized.

Languages having the status of national minority's language are [Armenian](/wiki/Armenian_language), [Belarusian](/wiki/Belarusian_language), [Czech](/wiki/Czech_language), [German](/wiki/German_language), [Yiddish](/wiki/Yiddish_language), [Hebrew](/wiki/Hebrew_language), [Lithuanian](/wiki/Lithuanian_language), [Russian](/wiki/Russian_language), [Slovak](/wiki/Slovak_language) and [Ukrainian](/wiki/Ukrainian_language). Languages having the status of ethnic minority's language are [Karaim](/wiki/Karaim_language), [Kashubian](/wiki/Kashubian_language), [Rusyn](/wiki/Rusyn_language) (called *Lemko* in Poland) and [Tatar](/wiki/Tatar_language). Also, official recognition is granted to two [Romani languages](/wiki/Romani_languages): [Polska Roma](/wiki/Polska_Roma) and [Bergitka Roma](/wiki/Bergitka_Roma).[[157]](#cite_note-157) Official recognition of a language provides certain rights (under conditions prescribed by the law): of education in that language, of having the language established as the secondary administrative language or help language in bilingual [municipalities](/wiki/Bilingual_communes_in_Poland) and of financial support from the state for the promotion of that language.

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Pie chart](/wiki/Template:Pie_chart) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Częstochowa_-_Jasna_Góra_AL07.JPG)[Jasna Góra Monastery](/wiki/Jasna_Góra_Monastery) is a major pilgrimage site for Poland's many Catholics

From its beginnings, Poland has contributed substantially to the development of religious freedom. Since the country adopted Christianity in 966, it was also welcoming to other religions through a series of laws: [Statute of Kalisz](/wiki/Statute_of_Kalisz) (1264), [Warsaw Confederation](/wiki/Warsaw_Confederation) (1573). The Polish king [Władysław II Jagiełło](/wiki/Władysław_II_Jagiełło), however, was pressed by the Catholic Church to issue the [Edict of Wieluń](/wiki/Edict_of_Wieluń) (1424), outlawing early Protestant [Hussitism](/wiki/Hussite). Polish theological thought includes theological movements, such as Calvinist [Polish Brethren](/wiki/Polish_Brethren) and a number of other Protestant groups, as well as atheists, such as ex-Jesuit philosopher [Kazimierz Łyszczyński](/wiki/Kazimierz_Łyszczyński), one of the first atheist thinkers in Europe. Also, in the 16th-century, [Anabaptists](/wiki/Anabaptist) from the Netherlands and Germany settled in Poland—after being persecuted in Western Europe—and became known as the [Vistula delta Mennonites](/wiki/Vistula_delta_Mennonites).

Until [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II) Poland was a religiously diverse society, in which substantial [Jewish](/wiki/Jewish), [Christian Orthodox](/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_Church), [Protestant](/wiki/Protestant) and Roman Catholic groups coexisted.[[158]](#cite_note-158) In the Second Polish Republic, Roman Catholic was the dominant religion, declared by about 65% of the Polish citizens, followed by other Christian denominations, and about 3% of Judaism believers.[[159]](#cite_note-159) As a result of the [Holocaust](/wiki/Holocaust) and the post–World War II [flight and expulsion of German](/wiki/Flight_and_expulsion_of_Germans_from_Poland_during_and_after_World_War_II) and [Ukrainian](/wiki/Operation_Vistula) populations, Poland has become overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. In 2007, 88.4% of the population belonged to the Catholic Church.[[160]](#cite_note-160) Though rates of religious observance are lower, at 52%[[161]](#cite_note-161) or 51% of the Polish Catholics,[[162]](#cite_note-162) Poland remains one of the most devoutly religious countries in Europe.[[163]](#cite_note-163) From 16 October 1978 until his death on 2 April 2005 Karol Józef Wojtyła (later Pope [John Paul II](/wiki/John_Paul_II)), a Polish native, reigned as [Supreme Pontiff](/wiki/Pope) of the Roman Catholic Church. He has been the only [Slavic](/wiki/Slavic_peoples) and [Polish](/wiki/Poles) Pope to date, and was the first non-Italian Pope since [Dutch](/wiki/Dutch_people) [Pope Adrian VI](/wiki/Pope_Adrian_VI) in 1522.[[164]](#cite_note-164) Additionally he is credited with having played a significant role in hastening the downfall of communism in Poland and throughout [Central and Eastern Europe](/wiki/Central_and_Eastern_Europe); he is famously quoted as having, at the height of communism in 1979, told Poles "not be afraid", later praying: "Let your Spirit descend and change the image of the land... this land".[[165]](#cite_note-165)[[166]](#cite_note-166) [thumb|left|Holy Spirit Orthodox Church in](/wiki/File:Cerkiew_Świętego_Ducha_Białystok.JPG) [Białystok](/wiki/Białystok)

Religious minorities include [Polish Orthodox](/wiki/Polish_Orthodox_Church) (about 506,800),[[2]](#cite_note-2) various Protestants (about 150,000),[[2]](#cite_note-2) [Jehovah's Witnesses](/wiki/Jehovah's_Witnesses) (126,827),[[2]](#cite_note-2) [Eastern Catholics](/wiki/Eastern_Catholic_Churches), [Mariavites](/wiki/Mariavite_Church), [Polish Catholics](/wiki/Polish_National_Catholic_Church), [Jews](/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Poland), and [Muslims](/wiki/Islam_in_Poland) (including the [Tatars](/wiki/Tatars) of [Białystok](/wiki/Białystok)). Members of Protestant churches include about 77,500 [Lutherans](/wiki/Lutherans) in the largest [Evangelical-Augsburg Church](/wiki/Evangelical-Augsburg_Church_in_Poland),[[2]](#cite_note-2) 23,000 [Pentecostals](/wiki/Pentecostalism) in the [Pentecostal Church in Poland](/wiki/Pentecostal_Church_in_Poland), and smaller numbers in various [Evangelical](/wiki/Evangelicalism) churches. There are also a several thousand pagans, some of whom are members of officially registered churches such as the [Native Polish Church](/wiki/Native_Polish_Church).

[thumb|Kraków's](/wiki/File:Krakow_Synagoga_Tempel_20071111_1123_2077.jpg) [Tempel Synagogue](/wiki/Tempel_Synagogue,_Kraków) is one of the largest in Poland

Freedom of religion is now guaranteed by the 1989 statute of the Polish Constitution,[[167]](#cite_note-167) enabling the emergence of additional denominations.[[168]](#cite_note-168) The [Concordat](/wiki/Concordat) between the [Holy See](/wiki/Holy_See) and Poland guarantees the teaching of religion in state[[169]](#cite_note-169) schools. According to a 2007 survey, 72% of respondents were not opposed to [religious instruction](/wiki/Catechism) in public schools; alternative courses in ethics are available only in one percent of the entire public educational system.[[170]](#cite_note-170) Famous sites of Christian pilgrimage in Poland include the [Monastery of Jasna Góra](/wiki/Jasna_Góra_Monastery) in the southern Polish city of [Częstochowa](/wiki/Częstochowa), as well as the [Family home of John Paul II](/wiki/Holy_Father_John_Paul_II_Family_Home_in_Wadowice) in [Wadowice](/wiki/Wadowice) just outside [Kraków](/wiki/Kraków).

### Health[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=36)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|Main clinical building of the](/wiki/File:MUG_Hospital_Bldg_1.jpg) [Gdańsk University Medical Centre](/wiki/Gdańsk_Medical_University) in [Wrzeszcz](/wiki/Wrzeszcz)

Poland's healthcare system is based on an all-inclusive insurance system. State subsidised healthcare is available to all Polish citizens who are covered by this general health insurance program. However, it is not compulsory to be treated in a state-run hospital as a number of private medical complexes do exist nationwide.[[171]](#cite_note-171) All medical service providers and hospitals in Poland are subordinate to the [Polish Ministry of Health](/wiki/Ministry_of_Health_of_the_Republic_of_Poland), which provides oversight and scrutiny of general medical practice as well as being responsible for the day-to-day administration of the healthcare system. In addition to these roles, the ministry is also tasked with the maintenance of standards of hygiene and patient-care.

Hospitals in Poland are organised according to the regional administrative structure, resultantly most towns have their own hospital *(Szpital Miejski)*.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Larger and more specialised medical complexes tend only to be found in larger cities, with some even more specialised units located only in the capital, [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw). However, all [voivodeships](/wiki/Voivodeship) have their own general hospital (most have more than one), all of which are obliged to have a trauma centre; these types of hospital, which are able to deal with almost all medical problems are called 'regional hospitals' *(Szpital Wojewódzki)*. The last category of hospital in Poland is that of specialised medical centres, an example of which would be the [Skłodowska-Curie Institute of Oncology](/wiki/Curie_Institute,_Warsaw), Poland's leading, and most highly specialised centre for the research and treatment of cancer.

In 2012, the Polish health-care industry experienced a transformation. Hospitals were given priority for refurbishment where necessary.[[172]](#cite_note-172) As a result of this process, many hospitals were updated with the latest medical equipment.

In 2013, the average [life expectancy](/wiki/Life_expectancy) at birth was 76.45 years (72.53 years infant male/80.62 years infant female).[[173]](#cite_note-173)

### Education[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=37)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|The wearing of traditional](/wiki/File:Ryszard_Kaczorowski_21_02_2008_(4).jpg) [academic regalia](/wiki/Academic_dress) is an important feature of Polish university ceremonies [thumb|Density of collegiate-level institutions of higher education](/wiki/File:PL-uczelnie.png)

The [Commission of National Education](/wiki/Commission_of_National_Education) (*Komisja Edukacji Narodowej*) established in 1773, was the world's first state ministry of education.[[174]](#cite_note-174)[[175]](#cite_note-175) The education of Polish society was a goal of the nation's rulers as early as the 12th-century. The library catalogue of the [Cathedral Chapter](/wiki/Cathedral_chapter) of Kraków dating back to 1110 shows that in the early 12th-century Polish academia had access to European and Classical literature. The [Jagiellonian University](/wiki/Jagiellonian_University) was founded in 1364 by [King Casimir III](/wiki/Casimir_III_the_Great) in Kraków—the school is [the world's 19th oldest university](/wiki/List_of_oldest_universities_in_continuous_operation).

The modern-day [Programme for International Student Assessment](/wiki/Programme_for_International_Student_Assessment), coordinated by the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development), ranks Poland's educational system in its [PISA 2012](/wiki/PISA_2012) as the 10th best in the world,[[176]](#cite_note-176) scoring higher than the OECD average.[[177]](#cite_note-177) Education in Poland starts at the age of five or six (with the particular age chosen by the parents) for the '0' class (Kindergarten) and six or seven years in the 1st class of primary school ([Polish](/wiki/Polish_language) *szkoła podstawowa*). It is compulsory that children participate in one year of formal education before entering the 1st class at no later than 7 years of age. [Corporal punishment](/wiki/Corporal_punishment) of children in [schools](/wiki/School_corporal_punishment) is officially prohibited since 1783 (before the partitions) and criminalised since 2010 (in schools as well as at home).

At the end of the 6th class when students are 13, students take a compulsory exam that will determine their acceptance and transition into a specific lower secondary school (*gimnazjum, pronounced gheem-nah-sium*) (Middle School/Junior High). They will attend this school for three years during classes 7, 8, and 9. Students then take another compulsory exam to determine the upper secondary level school they will attend. There are several alternatives, the most common being the three years in a *liceum* or four years in a [technikum](/wiki/Technikum). Both end with a maturity examination ([matura](/wiki/Matura)—similar to French [baccalauréat](/wiki/Baccalauréat)), and may be followed by several forms of higher education, leading to [licencjat](/wiki/Licencjat) or inżynier (the Polish [Bologna Process](/wiki/Bologna_Process) first cycle qualification), [magister](/wiki/Magister_(degree)) (second cycle qualification) and eventually [doktor](/wiki/Doktor) (third cycle qualification).[[178]](#cite_note-178) In Poland, there are 500 university-level institutions for the pursuit of higher education.[[179]](#cite_note-179) There are 18 fully accredited traditional universities, 20 technical universities, 9 independent medical universities, 5 universities for the study of economics, 9 agricultural academies, 3 pedagogical universities, a theological academy, 3 maritime service universities and 4 national military academies. Also, there are a number of higher educational institutions dedicated to the teaching of the arts—amongst these are the 7 academies of music.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **align=center|**[**University of Warsaw**](/wiki/University_of_Warsaw)[**[180]**](#cite_note-180) | **align=center|**[**Kraków**](/wiki/Kraków)[**Jagiellonian University**](/wiki/Jagiellonian_University)[**[180]**](#cite_note-180) | **align=center|**[**Poznań**](/wiki/Poznań)[**Mickiewicz University**](/wiki/Adam_Mickiewicz_University)[**[180]**](#cite_note-180) | **align=center|**[**University of Wrocław**](/wiki/University_of_Wrocław)[**[180]**](#cite_note-180) |
| [163x163px](/wiki/File:Warszawafl8.jpg) | [180x180px](/wiki/File:Collegium_Novum_UJ_02_Krakow.jpg) | [219x219px](/wiki/File:Colegio_Minus,_Poznan,_Polonia,_2014-09-18,_DD_50.jpg) | [190x190px](/wiki/File:UniwersytetWrocławski.jpg) |

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=38)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:Schweikart_Tadeusz_Kościuszko.jpg)[Tadeusz Kościuszko](/wiki/Tadeusz_Kościuszko) was a veteran and hero of both [Polish](/wiki/Polish–Russian_War_of_1792) and [American](/wiki/American_Revolutionary_War) wars of independence between 1765-1794[[181]](#cite_note-181) The culture of Poland is closely connected with its intricate 1,000-year [history](/wiki/History_of_Poland)[[182]](#cite_note-182) Its unique character developed as a result of its geography at the confluence of European cultures. With origins in the culture of the [Proto-Slavs](/wiki/Proto-Slavs), over time Polish culture has been profoundly influenced by its interweaving ties with the [Germanic](/wiki/Germanic_languages), [Latinate](/wiki/Latinate) and [Byzantine](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire) worlds as well as in continual dialog with the many other ethnic groups and minorities living in Poland.[[183]](#cite_note-183) The people of Poland have traditionally been seen as hospitable to artists from abroad and eager to follow cultural and artistic trends popular in other countries. In the 19th and 20th centuries the Polish focus on cultural advancement often took precedence over political and economic activity. These factors have contributed to the versatile nature of Polish art, with all its complex nuances.[[183]](#cite_note-183)

### Famous people[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=39)]

[thumb|left|upright|](/wiki/File:Nikolaus_Kopernikus.jpg)[Nicolaus Copernicus](/wiki/Nicolaus_Copernicus), the 16th-century Polish astronomer who formulated the [heliocentric](/wiki/Heliocentrism) model of the solar system that placed the Sun rather than the Earth at its center — work first published in 1543

The [list of famous Poles](/wiki/List_of_Polish_people) begins in earnest with the polymath [Mikołaj Kopernik](/wiki/Nicolaus_Copernicus) (Nicolaus Copernicus),[[184]](#cite_note-184) who studied at the [Jagiellonian University](/wiki/Jagiellonian_University) founded in 1364 by Casimir the Great from proceeds of his [Wieliczka Salt Mine](/wiki/Wieliczka_Salt_Mine).[[185]](#cite_note-185) Poland is the birthplace of many distinguished personalities among whom are: [Fryderyk Chopin](/wiki/Fryderyk_Chopin),[[186]](#cite_note-186)[[187]](#cite_note-187) [Maria Skłodowska Curie](/wiki/Maria_Skłodowska_Curie),[[188]](#cite_note-188) [Tadeusz Kościuszko](/wiki/Tadeusz_Kościuszko), [Kazimierz Pułaski](/wiki/Kazimierz_Pułaski), [Józef Piłsudski](/wiki/Józef_Piłsudski), [Lech Wałęsa](/wiki/Lech_Wałęsa) and [Pope John Paul II](/wiki/Pope_John_Paul_II) (Karol Wojtyła). Great Polish painter [Jan Matejko](/wiki/Jan_Matejko) devoted his monumental art to the most significant historical events on Polish lands, along with the playwright, painter and poet [Stanisław Wyspiański](/wiki/Stanisław_Wyspiański). [Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy)](/wiki/Stanisław_Ignacy_Witkiewicz) was an example of a Polish avant-garde philosopher and author of aesthetic theories. [Joseph Conrad](/wiki/Joseph_Conrad) was a notable author of works in English.[[189]](#cite_note-189) Many world famous [Polish movie directors](/wiki/Cinema_of_Poland) include [Academy Awards](/wiki/Academy_Award) winners [Roman Polański](/wiki/Roman_Polanski), [Andrzej Wajda](/wiki/Andrzej_Wajda), [Zbigniew Rybczyński](/wiki/Zbigniew_Rybczyński), [Janusz Kamiński](/wiki/Janusz_Kamiński), [Krzysztof Kieślowski](/wiki/Krzysztof_Kieślowski), and [Agnieszka Holland](/wiki/Agnieszka_Holland). Actresses known outside of Poland, include [Helena Modjeska](/wiki/Helena_Modjeska) and [Pola Negri](/wiki/Pola_Negri).

### Society[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=40)]

Poland has a long-standing tradition of tolerance towards minorities, as well as an absence of discrimination on the grounds of religion, nationality or race.[[190]](#cite_note-190) Prior to World War II, ethnic minorities made up a significant proportion of the Polish population. Poland has maintained a high level of [gender equality](/wiki/Gender_equality), an established [disability rights movement](/wiki/Disability_rights_movement) and promotes peaceful equality.[[190]](#cite_note-190) [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:John_Paul_II_1980_cropped.JPG)[John Paul II](/wiki/Pope_John_Paul_II) was the first [Pole](/wiki/Poles) and [Slav](/wiki/Slavs) to become a [Roman Catholic](/wiki/Catholic_Church) Pope. He held the papacy between 1978-2005

Poland was the first country in the world to prohibit [corporal punishment](/wiki/Corporal_punishment) in all its forms. Poland has, throughout most of its long history, experienced only very limited immigration from abroad; this trend can be largely attributed to Poland's rejection of slavery and to a lack of overseas colonies as well as occupation of its territories during much of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Despite this, the country has for a long time been regarded as having a very tolerant society, which affords equal rights to all people no matter what their ethnic background.[[190]](#cite_note-190) This can be said to stem largely from the reign of King [Casimir III the Great](/wiki/Casimir_III_the_Great) and his acceptance of Poland's [Jewish community](/wiki/Jewish_community), in a time when most of Europe recessed into [antisemitic](/wiki/Antisemitic) moods and actions. The [history of Jews in Poland](/wiki/History_of_Jews_in_Poland) exemplifies peaceful co-existence of a nation with a particular [ethnic group](/wiki/Ethnic_group).[[190]](#cite_note-190) Today, as many as 96.7% of Polish citizens declare to be [Poles](/wiki/Poles), and 97.8% declare that they speak [Polish](/wiki/Polish_language) at home (Census 2002). The population of Poland became one of the most ethnically homogeneous in the world as a result of the radically altered borders after [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II) and the subsequent migrations. This homogeneity is a result of post World War II deportations ordered by the Soviet authorities, who wished to remove the sizeable Polish minorities from Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine and [repatriation of Ukrainians from Poland to the Soviet Union](/wiki/Repatriation_of_Ukrainians_from_Poland_to_the_Soviet_Union) (see [territorial changes of Poland](/wiki/Territorial_changes_of_Poland) and [historical demography of Poland](/wiki/Historical_demography_of_Poland) for details). Unlike in many other countries, the ethnic [minority rights](/wiki/Minority_rights) in Poland are guaranteed directly by the [Constitution of Poland](/wiki/Constitution_of_Poland) (art. 35), and today there are, among others, sizeable [German](/wiki/German_minority_in_Poland), [Ukrainian](/wiki/Ukrainian_minority_in_Poland) and [Belarusian](/wiki/Belarusian_minority_in_Poland) minorities in the country.[[191]](#cite_note-191) In 2013, the [Polish parliament](/wiki/Sejm) rejected [proposed legislation](/wiki/Recognition_of_same-sex_unions_in_Poland#Legislation) for civil partnerships, which the majority of Polish society is against,[[192]](#cite_note-192) but for the first time it gave an asylum to a gay person from Uganda on the basis of the sexual orientation.[[193]](#cite_note-193) In a 2013 opinion poll conducted by [CBOS](/wiki/Centrum_Badania_Opinii_Społecznej), 60% of Poles were against homosexual civil partnerships, 72% were against [same-sex marriage](/wiki/Same-sex_marriage), 88% were against adoption by same-sex couples, and 68% were against gays and lesbians publicly showing their way of life.[[192]](#cite_note-192) Article 18 of the [Constitution of Poland](/wiki/Constitution_of_Poland) bans same-sex marriage.[[194]](#cite_note-194) The results of an [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](/wiki/Organization_for_Security_and_Co-operation_in_Europe) (OSCE) survey from 2004 showed that Poles worked the second most hours per week of any nationality worldwide. Poland remains one of the most safe and peaceful countries in the world.[[195]](#cite_note-195)

### Music[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=41)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [upright|left|thumb|](/wiki/File:Frederic_Chopin_photo.jpeg)[Fryderyk Chopin](/wiki/Frédéric_Chopin) was a renowned classical composer and virtuoso pianist [Template:Listen](/wiki/Template:Listen) Artists from Poland, including famous composers like [Chopin](/wiki/Frédéric_Chopin) or [Penderecki](/wiki/Krzysztof_Penderecki) and traditional, regionalized [folk musicians](/wiki/Folk_music), create a lively and diverse music scene, which even recognizes its own [music genres](/wiki/Music_genre), such as [poezja śpiewana](/wiki/Poezja_śpiewana) and [disco polo](/wiki/Disco_polo). [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), Poland is one of the few countries in Europe where [rock](/wiki/Rock_and_roll) and [hip hop](/wiki/Hip_hop_music) dominate over pop music, while all kinds of [alternative music](/wiki/Alternative_music) genres are encouraged.[[196]](#cite_note-196) The origins of Polish music can be traced as far back as the 13th century; manuscripts have been found in [Stary Sącz](/wiki/Stary_Sącz), containing [polyphonic](/wiki/Polyphony) compositions related to the Parisian [Notre Dame School](/wiki/Notre_Dame_School). Other early compositions, such as the melody of [*Bogurodzica*](/wiki/Bogurodzica) and [*Bóg się rodzi*](/wiki/Bóg_się_rodzi) (a coronation polonaise for Polish kings by an unknown composer), may also date back to this period, however, the first known notable composer, [Mikołaj z Radomia](/wiki/Mikołaj_z_Radomia), was born and lived in the 15th century. During the 16th century, two main musical groups – both based in [Kraków](/wiki/Kraków) and belonging to the King and Archbishop of Wawel – led to the rapid development of Polish music. Composers writing during this period include [Wacław z Szamotuł](/wiki/Wacław_z_Szamotuł), [Mikołaj Zieleński](/wiki/Mikołaj_Zieleński), and [Mikołaj Gomółka](/wiki/Mikołaj_Gomółka). [Diomedes Cato](/wiki/Diomedes_Cato), a native-born Italian who lived in Kraków from about the age of five, became a renowned lutenist at the court of Sigismund III, and not only imported some of the musical styles from southern Europe, but blended them with native folk music.[[197]](#cite_note-197) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Lutoslawski2.jpg)[Witold Lutosławski](/wiki/Witold_Lutosławski) was one of the premier European composers of the 20th century

At the end of the 18th century, Polish classical music evolved into national forms like the [polonaise](/wiki/Polonaise). In the 19th century the most popular composers were: [Józef Elsner](/wiki/Józef_Elsner) and his pupils [Fryderyk Chopin](/wiki/Fryderyk_Chopin) and Ignacy Dobrzyński. Important opera composers of the era were [Karol Kurpiński](/wiki/Karol_Kurpiński) and [Stanisław Moniuszko](/wiki/Stanisław_Moniuszko) whilst the list of famous soloists and composers included [Henryk Wieniawski](/wiki/Henryk_Wieniawski), [Juliusz Zarębski](/wiki/Juliusz_Zarębski). At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries the most prominent composers could said to have been [Władysław Zeleński](/wiki/Władysław_Żeleński_(musician)) and [Mieczysław Karłowicz](/wiki/Mieczysław_Karłowicz), with [Karol Szymanowski](/wiki/Karol_Szymanowski) gaining prominence prior to World War II. [Alexandre Tansman](/wiki/Alexandre_Tansman) lived in Paris but had strong connections with Poland. [Witold Lutosławski](/wiki/Witold_Lutosławski), [Henryk Górecki](/wiki/Henryk_Górecki), and [Krzysztof Penderecki](/wiki/Krzysztof_Penderecki) composed in Poland, [Andrzej Panufnik](/wiki/Andrzej_Panufnik) emigrated. [Template:Listen](/wiki/Template:Listen)

Traditional Polish folk music has had a major effect on the works of many well-known Polish composers, and no more so than on Fryderyk Chopin, a widely recognised national hero of the arts. All of Chopin's [works](/wiki/List_of_compositions_by_Frédéric_Chopin) involve the piano and are technically demanding, emphasising nuance and expressive depth. As a great composer, Chopin invented the [musical form](/wiki/Musical_form) known as the [instrumental ballade](/wiki/Ballade_(classical_music)#Instrumental_ballades) and made major innovations to the [piano sonata](/wiki/Piano_sonata), [mazurka](/wiki/Mazurka), [waltz](/wiki/Waltz), [nocturne](/wiki/Nocturne), [polonaise](/wiki/Polonaise), [étude](/wiki/Étude), [impromptu](/wiki/Impromptu) and [prélude](/wiki/Prelude_(music)), he was also the composer of a number of polonaises which borrowed heavily from traditional Polish folk music. It is largely thanks to him that the such pieces gained great popularity throughout Europe during the 19th century. Nowadays the most distinctive folk music can be heard in the towns and villages of the mountainous south, particularly in the region surrounding the winter resort town of [Zakopane](/wiki/Zakopane).

Today Poland has a very active music scene, with the jazz and metal genres being particularly popular among the contemporary populace. Polish jazz musicians such as [Krzysztof Komeda](/wiki/Krzysztof_Komeda), created a unique style, which was most famous in the 1960s and 1970s and continues to be popular to this day. Since the fall of Communism, Poland has become a major venue for large-scale music festivals, chief among which are the [Open'er Festival](/wiki/Open'er_Festival), [Opole Festival](/wiki/Opole_Festival) and [Sopot Festival](/wiki/Sopot_Festival).

### Visual arts[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=42)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|400px|](/wiki/File:Prussian_Homage.jpg)[*Prussian Homage*](/wiki/Prussian_Homage_(painting)) (*Hołd pruski*) by [Jan Matejko](/wiki/Jan_Matejko), 1882

Polish art has always reflected European trends while maintaining its unique character. The [Kraków](/wiki/Kraków) school of Historicist painting developed by [Jan Matejko](/wiki/Jan_Matejko) produced monumental portrayals of customs and significant events in Polish history. [Stanisław Witkiewicz](/wiki/Stanisław_Witkiewicz) was an ardent supporter of [realism](/wiki/Realism_(arts)) in Polish art, its main representative being [Jozef Chełmoński](/wiki/Józef_Marian_Chełmoński). The Młoda Polska ([Young Poland](/wiki/Young_Poland)) movement witnessed the birth of modern Polish art, and engaged in a great deal of formal experimentation led by [Jacek Malczewski](/wiki/Jacek_Malczewski) ([Symbolism](/wiki/Symbolism_(arts))), [Stanisław Wyspiański](/wiki/Stanisław_Wyspiański), [Józef Mehoffer](/wiki/Józef_Mehoffer), and a group of Polish [Impressionists](/wiki/Impressionists). Artists of the twentieth-century Avant-Garde represented various schools and trends. The art of [Tadeusz Makowski](/wiki/Tadeusz_Makowski) was influenced by [Cubism](/wiki/Cubism); while [Władysław Strzemiński](/wiki/Władysław_Strzemiński) and [Henryk Stażewski](/wiki/Henryk_Stażewski) worked within the Constructivist idiom. Distinguished contemporary artists include [Roman Opałka](/wiki/Roman_Opałka), Leon Tarasewicz, [Jerzy Nowosielski](/wiki/Jerzy_Nowosielski), [Wojciech Siudmak](/wiki/Wojciech_Siudmak), [Mirosław Bałka](/wiki/Mirosław_Bałka), and [Katarzyna Kozyra](/wiki/Katarzyna_Kozyra) and Zbigniew Wąsiel in the younger generation. The most celebrated Polish sculptors include [Xawery Dunikowski](/wiki/Xawery_Dunikowski), [Katarzyna Kobro](/wiki/Katarzyna_Kobro), [Alina Szapocznikow](/wiki/Alina_Szapocznikow) and [Magdalena Abakanowicz](/wiki/Magdalena_Abakanowicz). Since the inter-war years, Polish art and documentary photography has enjoyed worldwide recognition. In the sixties the Polish Poster School was formed, with [Henryk Tomaszewski](/wiki/Henryk_Tomaszewski_(poster_artist)) and [Waldemar Świerzy](/wiki/Waldemar_Świerzy) at its head.[[183]](#cite_note-183) Top fine Art schools in Poland are [Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts](/wiki/Jan_Matejko_Academy_of_Fine_Arts), [Cracow School of Art and Fashion Design](/wiki/Cracow_School_of_Art_and_Fashion_Design), [Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw](/wiki/Academy_of_Fine_Arts_in_Warsaw), [Art Academy of Szczecin](/wiki/Art_Academy_of_Szczecin), [University of Fine Arts in Poznań](/wiki/University_of_Fine_Arts_in_Poznań) and [Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Fine Arts](/wiki/Eugeniusz_Geppert_Academy_of_Fine_Arts).

### Architecture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=43)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [thumb|upright|left|](/wiki/File:Kosc_mar1.JPG)[St. Mary's Basilica](/wiki/St._Mary's_Basilica,_Kraków) on the [Main Market Square](/wiki/Main_Market_Square,_Kraków) in [Kraków](/wiki/Kraków) is an example of [Brick Gothic](/wiki/Brick_Gothic) architecture

Polish cities and towns reflect a whole spectrum of European architectural styles. [Romanesque architecture](/wiki/Romanesque_architecture) is represented by [St. Andrew's Church, Kraków](/wiki/St._Andrew's_Church,_Kraków), and [St. Mary's Church, Gdańsk](/wiki/St._Mary's_Church,_Gdańsk), is characteristic for the [Brick Gothic](/wiki/Brick_Gothic) style found in Poland. Richly decorated [attics](/wiki/Attic_style) and [arcade](/wiki/Arcade_(architecture)) [loggias](/wiki/Loggia) are the common elements of the Polish Renaissance architecture,[[198]](#cite_note-198)[[199]](#cite_note-199) as evident in the [City Hall](/wiki/Poznań_City_Hall) in Poznań. For some time the late renaissance style known as [mannerism](/wiki/Mannerism), most notably in the [Bishop's Palace](/wiki/Cracow_Bishops'_Palace_in_Kielce) in [Kielce](/wiki/Kielce), coexisted with the early baroque style, typified in the Church of SS. Peter and Paul in Kraków. [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:Ayuntamiento,_Poznan,_Polonia,_2014-09-18,_DD_67-72_HDR.jpg)[Ratusz](/wiki/Ratusz), the [Renaissance](/wiki/Renaissance_in_Poland) City Hall in [Poznań](/wiki/Poznań)

History has not been kind to Poland's architectural monuments. Nonetheless, a number of ancient structures has survived: castles, churches, and stately homes, often unique in the regional or European context. Some of them have been painstakingly restored, like [Wawel Castle](/wiki/Wawel_Castle), or completely reconstructed after being destroyed in the [Second World War](/wiki/Second_World_War), including the [Old Town](/wiki/Warsaw_Old_Town) and [Royal Castle](/wiki/Royal_Castle_in_Warsaw) of Warsaw and the Old Town of [Gdańsk](/wiki/Gdańsk).

The architecture of Gdańsk is mostly of the Hanseatic variety, a Gothic style common among the former trading cities along the Baltic sea and in the northern part of Central Europe. The architectural style of [Wrocław](/wiki/Wrocław) is mainly representative of German architecture, since it was for centuries located within the German states. The centre of [Kazimierz Dolny](/wiki/Kazimierz_Dolny) on the [Vistula](/wiki/Vistula) is a good example of a well-preserved medieval town. Poland's ancient capital, [Kraków](/wiki/Kraków), ranks among the best-preserved [Gothic](/wiki/Gothic_architecture) and Renaissance urban complexes in Europe. Meanwhile, the legacy of the [Kresy](/wiki/Kresy) Marchlands of Poland's eastern regions, where Wilno and Lwów (now *Vilnius* and *Lviv*) were recognised as two major centres for the arts, played a special role in the development of Polish architecture, with Catholic church architecture deserving special note.[[183]](#cite_note-183) The second half of the 17th-century is marked by [baroque](/wiki/Baroque) architecture. Side towers, such as those of [Branicki Palace](/wiki/Branicki_Palace,_Białystok) in Białystok, are typical for the Polish baroque. The classical [Silesian baroque](/wiki/Silesian_architecture) is represented by the University in Wrocław. The profuse decorations of the [Branicki Palace](/wiki/Branicki_Palace,_Warsaw) in Warsaw are characteristic of the [rococo](/wiki/Rococo) style. The centre of Polish classicism was Warsaw under the rule of the last Polish king [Stanisław August Poniatowski](/wiki/Stanisław_August_Poniatowski).[[200]](#cite_note-200)The [Palace on the Water](/wiki/Łazienki_Palace) is the most notable example of Polish [neoclassical architecture](/wiki/Neoclassical_architecture). [Lublin Castle](/wiki/Lublin_Castle) represents the [Gothic Revival](/wiki/Gothic_Revival_architecture) style in architecture, while the Izrael Poznański Palace in Łódź is an example of [eclecticism](/wiki/Eclecticism).

### Literature[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=44)]

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[Polish literature](/wiki/Polish_literature) dates back to the 12th century,[[201]](#cite_note-201) and includes many renowned writers. Two Polish [novelists](/wiki/Novelist) have won the [Nobel Prize in Literature](/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Literature): [Henryk Sienkiewicz](/wiki/Henryk_Sienkiewicz), and [Władysław Reymont](/wiki/Władysław_Reymont); along with two poets: [Czesław Miłosz](/wiki/Czesław_Miłosz), and [Wisława Szymborska](/wiki/Wisława_Szymborska).[[202]](#cite_note-202)[[203]](#cite_note-203) A prose poet of the highest order, [Joseph Conrad](/wiki/Joseph_Conrad) (1857–1924), son of the Polish dramatist [Apollo Korzeniowski](/wiki/Apollo_Korzeniowski), won world-wide fame with his English-language novels and stories that are informed with elements of the [Polish national experience](/wiki/History_of_Poland).[[204]](#cite_note-204)[[205]](#cite_note-205) Among the best known [Polish Romantics](/wiki/Romanticism_in_Poland) are the "[Three Bards](/wiki/Three_Bards)" — the three [national poets](/wiki/National_poets) active in the age of partitions: [Adam Mickiewicz](/wiki/Adam_Mickiewicz), [Juliusz Słowacki](/wiki/Juliusz_Słowacki), and [Zygmunt Krasiński](/wiki/Zygmunt_Krasiński).[[206]](#cite_note-206) During the Middle Ages, most Polish writers and scholars (e.g., [Jan Długosz](/wiki/Jan_Długosz)) wrote only in Latin, the common language of European letters. This tradition was broken by [Jan Kochanowski](/wiki/Jan_Kochanowski), who became one of the first [Polish Renaissance](/wiki/Renaissance_in_Poland) authors to write most of his works in Polish, along with [Mikołaj Rej](/wiki/Mikołaj_Rej). Also, notable are the 19th and 20th-century Polish authors such as [Bolesław Prus](/wiki/Bolesław_Prus), [Kornel Makuszyński](/wiki/Kornel_Makuszyński), [Stanisław Lem](/wiki/Stanisław_Lem), and [Witold Gombrowicz](/wiki/Witold_Gombrowicz) among others.

### Media[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=45)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [left|thumb|Headquarters of the national television network](/wiki/File:Moderne_wolkenkrabber_Warschau_0875.PNG) [TVP](/wiki/Telewizja_Polska) in [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw)

Poland has instituted [freedom of press](/wiki/Freedom_of_press) since the fall of communism, a system under which the media was heavily politically controlled and censored. However, public TV and radio are still regulated by the government, this is exercised through an agency called [*Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji*](/wiki/Krajowa_Rada_Radiofonii_i_Telewizji) (*The National Radio and Television Committee*), which is similar to television regulatory commissions in other developed nations.

Poland has a number of major media outlets, chief among which are the national television channels. [TVP](/wiki/Telewizja_Polska) is Poland's [public broadcasting](/wiki/Public_broadcasting) corporation; about a third of its income comes from a [broadcast receiver licence](/wiki/Television_licence), while the rest is made through revenue from [commercials](/wiki/Television_advertisement) and [sponsorships](/wiki/Sponsor_(commercial)). State television operates two mainstream channels, TVP 1 and TVP 2, as well as regional programs ([TVP Info](/wiki/TVP_Info)) for each of the country's 16 [voivodeships](/wiki/Voivodeship). In addition to these general channels, TVP runs a number of genre-specific programmes such as [TVP Sport](/wiki/TVP_Sport), [TVP Historia](/wiki/TVP_Historia), [TVP Kultura](/wiki/TVP_Kultura), [TVP Seriale](/wiki/TVP_Seriale) and [TV Polonia](/wiki/TV_Polonia), the latter is a state-run channel dedicated to the transmission of Polish language television for the [Polish diaspora](/wiki/Polish_diaspora) abroad.

[thumb|right|Head office of the newspaper](/wiki/File:POL_Warsaw_Prosta_Street.jpg) [*Rzeczpospolita*](/wiki/Rzeczpospolita_(newspaper)) in [Warsaw](/wiki/Warsaw)

Poland has a number of internationally broadcast and 24-hour news channels, chief among which are [Polsat News](/wiki/Polsat_News), [TVN 24](/wiki/TVN_24). There are a number of major private television outlets such as [Polsat](/wiki/Polsat) and the [TVN network](/wiki/TVN_(Poland)).

Poland has a highly developed printed news industry, with daily newspapers like [*Gazeta Wyborcza*](/wiki/Gazeta_Wyborcza) ("Electoral Gazette"), [*Rzeczpospolita*](/wiki/Rzeczpospolita_(newspaper)) ("The Republic") and [*Gazeta Polska Codziennie*](/wiki/Gazeta_Polska_Codziennie) ("Polish Daily Newspaper") providing more traditional reporting and tabloids such as [*Fakt*](/wiki/Fakt) providing more sensationalist journalism. *Rzeczpospolita*, founded in 1920 is one of the oldest newspapers still in operation. In 2006, it won a prestigious award for being, along with the [*Guardian*](/wiki/Guardian_(newspaper)) (a British daily), the best designed newspaper in the world.[[207]](#cite_note-207) The most popular weeklies are [Tygodnik Angora](/wiki/Tygodnik_Angora), [Polityka](/wiki/Polityka), [Wprost](/wiki/Wprost), [Newsweek Polska](/wiki/Newsweek_Polska), [Gość Niedzielny](/wiki/Gość_Niedzielny), and [Gazeta Polska](/wiki/Gazeta_Polska).

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=46)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|Selection of hearty traditional comfort food from Poland including](/wiki/File:07425_Jahrmarkt_in_Sanok_am_17_Juli_2011.jpg) [bigos](/wiki/Bigos), [cabbage rolls](/wiki/Cabbage_roll), [*żurek*](/wiki/Żurek), [pierogi](/wiki/Pierogi) and specialty breads

Polish cuisine has evolved over the centuries to become very eclectic due to Poland's history. Polish cuisine shares many similarities with other [Central European cuisines](/wiki/Central_Europe), especially [German](/wiki/German_cuisine) and [Austrian](/wiki/Austrian_cuisine)[[208]](#cite_note-208) as well as [Jewish](/wiki/Jewish_cuisine),[[209]](#cite_note-209) [Belarusian](/wiki/Belarusian_cuisine), [Ukrainian](/wiki/Ukrainian_cuisine), [Russian](/wiki/Russian_cuisine),[[210]](#cite_note-210) [French](/wiki/French_cuisine) and [Italian](/wiki/Italian_cuisine) culinary traditions.[[211]](#cite_note-211) It is rich in meat, especially pork, chicken and beef (depending on the region) and winter vegetables (cabbage in the dish [*bigos*](/wiki/Bigos)), and spices.[[212]](#cite_note-212) It is also characteristic in its use of various kinds of [noodles](/wiki/Noodle) the most notable of which are [kluski](/wiki/Kluski) as well as [cereals](/wiki/Cereal) such as [*kasha*](/wiki/Kasha) (from the Polish word [kasza](/wiki/Kasza)).[[213]](#cite_note-213) Polish cuisine is hearty and uses a lot of cream and eggs. Festive meals such as the meatless [Christmas eve](/wiki/Christmas_eve) dinner ([*Wigilia*](/wiki/Wigilia)) or [Easter](/wiki/Easter) breakfast could take days to prepare in their entirety.[[214]](#cite_note-214) The main course usually includes a serving of meat, such as [roast](/wiki/Roast), chicken, or [*kotlet schabowy*](/wiki/Kotlet_schabowy) (breaded pork cutlet), vegetables, side dishes and salads, including *surówka* [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl) – shredded root vegetables with lemon and sugar (carrot, celeriac, [seared](/wiki/Searing) beetroot) or sauerkraut ([Template:Lang-pl](/wiki/Template:Lang-pl), [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl)). The side dishes are usually [potatoes](/wiki/Potatoes), [rice](/wiki/Rice) or *kasza* (cereals). Meals conclude with a dessert such as [*sernik*](/wiki/Cheesecake), [*makowiec*](/wiki/Makowiec_(pastry)) (a [poppy seed](/wiki/Poppy_seed) pastry), or *drożdżówka* [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl) [yeast pastry](/wiki/Viennoiserie), and tea.

[thumb|upright|The Festival of Bread (*Święto Chleba*) in](/wiki/File:Festival_of_bread3.JPG) [Kraków](/wiki/Kraków)

The Polish national dishes are [*bigos*](/wiki/Bigos) [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl); [*pierogi*](/wiki/Pierogi) [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl); [*kielbasa*](/wiki/Kielbasa); [*kotlet schabowy*](/wiki/Kotlet_schabowy) [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl) [breaded cutlet](/wiki/Breaded_cutlet); [*gołąbki*](/wiki/Gołąbki) [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl) [cabbage rolls](/wiki/Cabbage_roll); [*zrazy*](/wiki/Zrazy) [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl) [roulade](/wiki/Roulade); [*pieczeń*](/wiki/Roast) roast [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl); sour [cucumber soup](/wiki/Cucumber_soup) (*zupa ogórkowa*, [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl)); mushroom soup, (*zupa grzybowa*, [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl) quite different from the North American [cream of mushroom](/wiki/Cream_of_mushroom_soup)); *zupa pomidorowa* [tomato soup](/wiki/Tomato_soup) [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl);[[215]](#cite_note-215) [*rosół*](/wiki/Rosół) [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl) variety of meat broth; [*żurek*](/wiki/Żurek) [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl) sour rye soup; [*flaki*](/wiki/Flaki) [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl) [tripe soup](/wiki/Tripe_soup); [*barszcz*](/wiki/Barszcz) [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl) and [*chłodnik*](/wiki/Chłodnik) [Template:IPA-pl](/wiki/Template:IPA-pl) among others.[[216]](#cite_note-216) Traditional alcoholic beverages include honey [mead](/wiki/Mead), widespread since the 13th century, [beer](/wiki/Beer), [wine](/wiki/Wine) and [vodka](/wiki/Vodka) (old [Polish](/wiki/Polish_language) names include *okowita* and *gorzałka*). The world's first written mention of vodka originates from Poland.[[217]](#cite_note-217) The most popular alcoholic drinks at present are beer and wine which took over from vodka more popular in the years 1980-1998.[[218]](#cite_note-218) [Tea](/wiki/Tea) remains common in Polish society since the 19th century, whilst coffee is drunk widely since the 18th century. Other frequently consumed beverages include various [mineral waters](/wiki/Mineral_water) and [juices](/wiki/Juice), [soft drinks](/wiki/Soft_drink) popularized by the [fast-food](/wiki/Fast-food) chains since the late 20th century, as well as [buttermilk](/wiki/Buttermilk), [soured milk](/wiki/Soured_milk) and [kefir](/wiki/Kefir).

### Sports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=47)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|The](/wiki/File:National_Stadium_in_Warsaw,_Poland_-_Greece.jpg) [National Stadium](/wiki/National_Stadium,_Warsaw) in Warsaw, home of [national football team](/wiki/Poland_national_football_team), and one of the host stadiums of [Euro 2012](/wiki/UEFA_Euro_2012)

[Association football](/wiki/Association_football) is one of country's most popular sports, with a rich history of international competitions.[[219]](#cite_note-219)[[220]](#cite_note-220) [Track and field](/wiki/Track_and_field_athletics), basketball, volleyball, [handball](/wiki/Team_handball), [boxing](/wiki/Boxing), [MMA](/wiki/Mixed_martial_arts), [motorcycle speedway](/wiki/Motorcycle_speedway), [ski jumping](/wiki/Ski_jumping), [cross-country skiing](/wiki/Cross-country_skiing), [ice hockey](/wiki/Ice_hockey), tennis, fencing, swimming and [weightlifting](/wiki/Olympic_weightlifting) are other popular sports.

The golden era of [football in Poland](/wiki/Football_in_Poland) occurred throughout the 1970s and went on until the early 1980s when the [Polish national football team](/wiki/Poland_national_football_team) achieved their best results in any FIFA World Cup competitions finishing 3rd place in [the 1974](/wiki/1974_FIFA_World_Cup) and [the 1982](/wiki/1982_FIFA_World_Cup) tournaments. The team won a gold medal [in football](/wiki/Football_at_the_Summer_Olympics) at the [1972 Summer Olympics](/wiki/1972_Summer_Olympics) and two silver medals, [in 1976](/wiki/1976_Summer_Olympics) and [in 1992](/wiki/1992_Summer_Olympics). Poland, along with [Ukraine](/wiki/Ukraine), hosted the [UEFA European Football Championship in 2012](/wiki/UEFA_Euro_2012).[[221]](#cite_note-221) The [Polish men's national volleyball team](/wiki/Poland_men's_national_volleyball_team) is ranked [as 3rd](/wiki/FIVB_World_Rankings) in the world. [Mariusz Pudzianowski](/wiki/Mariusz_Pudzianowski) is a highly successful strongman competitor and has won more [World's Strongest Man](/wiki/World's_Strongest_Man) titles than any other competitor in the world, winning the event in 2008 for the fifth time. The first Polish [Formula One](/wiki/Formula_One) driver, [Robert Kubica](/wiki/Robert_Kubica), has brought awareness of Formula One racing to Poland. He won the [2008 Canadian Grand Prix](/wiki/2008_Canadian_Grand_Prix) and now does [rallying](/wiki/World_Rally_Championship) following a crash in 2011 that left him unable to drive F1 cars.

[thumb|](/wiki/File:Derby_Pomorza_2009_(Bydgoszcz).jpg)[Żużel](/wiki/Motorcycle_speedway) match in the Polish Motorcycle League between Polonia Bydgoszcz and Unibax Toruń, 2009 [[222]](#cite_note-222)

Poland has made a distinctive mark [in motorcycle speedway racing](/wiki/Speedway_in_Poland) thanks to [Tomasz Gollob](/wiki/Tomasz_Gollob), a highly successful Polish rider. The top [Ekstraliga](/wiki/Speedway_Ekstraliga) division has one of [the highest average attendances](/wiki/List_of_attendance_figures_at_domestic_professional_sports_leagues#Outdoor) for any sport in Poland. The [national speedway team of Poland](/wiki/Poland_national_speedway_team), one of the major teams in international speedway,[[223]](#cite_note-223) has won the [Speedway World Team Cup](/wiki/Speedway_World_Team_Cup) championships three times consecutively, in 2009, 2010, and 2011. No team has ever managed such feat.[[224]](#cite_note-224)[[225]](#cite_note-225) Poles made significant achievements in [mountaineering](/wiki/Mountaineering), in particular, in the [Himalayas](/wiki/Himalayas) and the winter ascending of the [eight-thousanders](/wiki/Eight-thousander). The most famous Polish climbers are [Jerzy Kukuczka](/wiki/Jerzy_Kukuczka), [Krzysztof Wielicki](/wiki/Krzysztof_Wielicki), [Piotr Pustelnik](/wiki/Piotr_Pustelnik), [Andrzej Zawada](/wiki/Andrzej_Zawada), [Maciej Berbeka](/wiki/Maciej_Berbeka), [Artur Hajzer](/wiki/Artur_Hajzer), [Andrzej Czok](/wiki/Andrzej_Czok), [Wojciech Kurtyka](/wiki/Wojciech_Kurtyka), and women [Wanda Rutkiewicz](/wiki/Wanda_Rutkiewicz), and [Kinga Baranowska](/wiki/Kinga_Baranowska). Polish mountains are one of the tourist attractions of the country. [Hiking](/wiki/Hiking), [climbing](/wiki/Climbing), [skiing](/wiki/Skiing) and mountain biking and attract numerous tourists every year from all over the world.[[135]](#cite_note-135) Water sports are the most popular summer recreation activities, with ample locations for fishing, canoeing, kayaking, sailing and windsurfing especially in the northern regions of the country.[[226]](#cite_note-226)[Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

## International rankings[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=48)]

The following are links to international rankings of Poland from selected research institutes and foundations including economic output and various composite indices.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Index** | **Rank** | **Countries reviewed** |
| [Human Development Index](/wiki/Human_Development_Index) 2014 | 36th | 187 |
| [Corruption Perceptions Index](/wiki/Corruption_Perceptions_Index) 2014 [[227]](#cite_note-227)| 35th | 175 |  |
| [OECD](/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development) [Working time](/wiki/Working_time) 2012 [[228]](#cite_note-228)| 5th | 34 |  |
| [Index of Economic Freedom](/wiki/Index_of_Economic_Freedom) 2015 | 42nd | 167 |
| [Globalization Index](/wiki/Globalization_Index) 2013 | 26th | 176 |
| [Global Peace Index](/wiki/Global_Peace_Index) 2014[[17]](#cite_note-17)| 19th | 162 |  |
| [Privacy International](/wiki/Privacy_International) Yearly Privacy ranking of countries, 2007 | 19th | 45 |
| [Reporters Without Borders](/wiki/Reporters_Without_Borders) [Press Freedom Index](/wiki/Press_Freedom_Index) 2014 | 19th | 180 |
| [UNICEF](/wiki/United_Nations_Children's_Fund) Children's Fund | 14th | 21 |
| [Networked Readiness Index](/wiki/Networked_Readiness_Index) 2013 [[229]](#cite_note-229)| 49th | 142 |  |
| [OICA](/wiki/Organisation_Internationale_des_Constructeurs_d'Automobiles) [Automobile Production](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_motor_vehicle_production) 2012 | 22nd | 50 |
| [Legatum Prosperity Index](/wiki/Legatum_Prosperity_Index) 2014 | 31st | 142 |
| [EF English Proficiency Index](/wiki/EF_English_Proficiency_Index) 2014 [[230]](#cite_note-230)| 6th | 60 |  |
| [Programme for International Student Assessment](/wiki/Programme_for_International_Student_Assessment) 2012 (Maths) | 13th | 65 |
| [Programme for International Student Assessment](/wiki/Programme_for_International_Student_Assessment) 2013 (Science) | 8th | 65 |
| [Programme for International Student Assessment](/wiki/Programme_for_International_Student_Assessment) 2013 (Reading) | 9th | 65 |

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=49)]

* [Outline of Poland](/wiki/Outline_of_Poland)

[Template:Portal bar](/wiki/Template:Portal_bar)

[Template:Geographic location](/wiki/Template:Geographic_location)

## Notes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=50)]

[Template:Refbegin](/wiki/Template:Refbegin)

a. [Template:Note label](/wiki/Template:Note_label) In other [languages of Poland](/wiki/Languages_of_Poland):

* [Template:Lang-csb](/wiki/Template:Lang-csb)
* [Template:Lang-szl](/wiki/Template:Lang-szl)

b. [Template:Note label](/wiki/Template:Note_label) Numerous sources state that Polish Army was the Allies' fourth biggest fighting contingent. [Steven J. Zaloga](/wiki/Steven_J._Zaloga) and [Richard Hook](/wiki/Richard_Hook) write that "by the war's end the Polish Army was the fourth largest contingent of the Allied coalition after the armed forces of the Soviet Union, the United States and the United Kingdom".[[231]](#cite_note-231) [Jerzy Jan Lerski](/wiki/Jerzy_Jan_Lerski) writes "All in all, the Polish units, although divided and controlled by different political orientation, constituted the fourth largest Allied force, after the America, British and Soviet Armies."[[232]](#cite_note-232) [M. K. Dziewanowski](/wiki/M._K._Dziewanowski) has noted that "if Polish forces fighting in the east and west were added to the resistance fighters, Poland had the fourth largest Allied army in the war (after the USSR, the U.S. and Britain)".[[233]](#cite_note-233)

The claim of the fourth biggest Ally needs to be reconsidered, however. Throughout the war, Poland's position varied from the 2nd biggest Ally (after the [fall of France](/wiki/Fall_of_France), when Polish army outnumbered the French) to perhaps the 5th at the end of it (after the USA, Soviet Union, China and Britain). Please, see the analysis in [Polish contribution to World War II](/wiki/Polish_contribution_to_World_War_II).

c. [Template:Note label](/wiki/Template:Note_label) Sources vary with regards to what was the largest resistance movement during World War II. The confusion often stems from the fact that as war progressed, some resistance movements grew larger – and other diminished. Polish territories were mostly freed from Nazi German control in the years 1944–1945, eliminating the need for their respective (anti-Nazi) partisan forces in Poland (although the [cursed soldiers](/wiki/Cursed_soldiers) continued to fight against the Soviets). Several sources note that Polish [Armia Krajowa](/wiki/Armia_Krajowa) was the largest resistance movement in Nazi-occupied Europe. [Norman Davies](/wiki/Norman_Davies) wrote: "Armia Krajowa (Home Army), the AK, which could fairly claim to be the largest of European resistance";[[234]](#cite_note-234) [Gregor Dallas](/wiki/Gregor_Dallas) wrote "Home Army (Armia Krajowa or AK) in late 1943 numbered around 400000, making it the largest resistance organization in Europe";[[235]](#cite_note-235) [Mark Wyman](/wiki/Mark_Wyman) wrote "Armia Krajowa was considered the largest underground resistance unit in wartime Europe".[[236]](#cite_note-236) Certainly, Polish resistance was the largest resistance till German [invasion of Yugoslavia](/wiki/Invasion_of_Yugoslavia) and [invasion of the Soviet Union](/wiki/Invasion_of_the_Soviet_Union) in 1941. After that point, the numbers of [Soviet partisans](/wiki/Soviet_partisans) and [Yugoslav partisans](/wiki/Yugoslav_partisans) begun growing rapidly. The numbers of [Soviet partisans](/wiki/Soviet_partisans) quickly caught up and were very similar to that of the Polish resistance.[[237]](#cite_note-237)[[238]](#cite_note-238) The numbers of Tito's [Yugoslav partisans](/wiki/Yugoslav_partisans) were roughly similar to those of the Polish and Soviet partisans in the first years of the war (1941–1942), but grew rapidly in the latter years, outnumbering the Polish and Soviet partisans by 2:1 or more (estimates give Yugoslavian forces about 800,000 in 1945, to Polish and Soviet forces of 400,000 in 1944).[[238]](#cite_note-238)[[239]](#cite_note-239)[Template:Refend](/wiki/Template:Refend)

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=51)]

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist) [Template:Authority control](/wiki/Template:Authority_control)

[Category:Poland](/wiki/Category:Poland) [Category:Central Europe](/wiki/Category:Central_Europe) [Category:Eastern Europe](/wiki/Category:Eastern_Europe) [Category:Countries in Europe](/wiki/Category:Countries_in_Europe) [Category:Liberal democracies](/wiki/Category:Liberal_democracies) [Category:Member states of NATO](/wiki/Category:Member_states_of_NATO) [Category:Member states of the Council of Europe](/wiki/Category:Member_states_of_the_Council_of_Europe) [Category:Member states of the European Union](/wiki/Category:Member_states_of_the_European_Union) [Category:Member states of the Union for the Mediterranean](/wiki/Category:Member_states_of_the_Union_for_the_Mediterranean) [Category:Member states of the United Nations](/wiki/Category:Member_states_of_the_United_Nations) [Category:Republics](/wiki/Category:Republics) [Category:Slavic countries and territories](/wiki/Category:Slavic_countries_and_territories) [Category:States and territories established in 1918](/wiki/Category:States_and_territories_established_in_1918)